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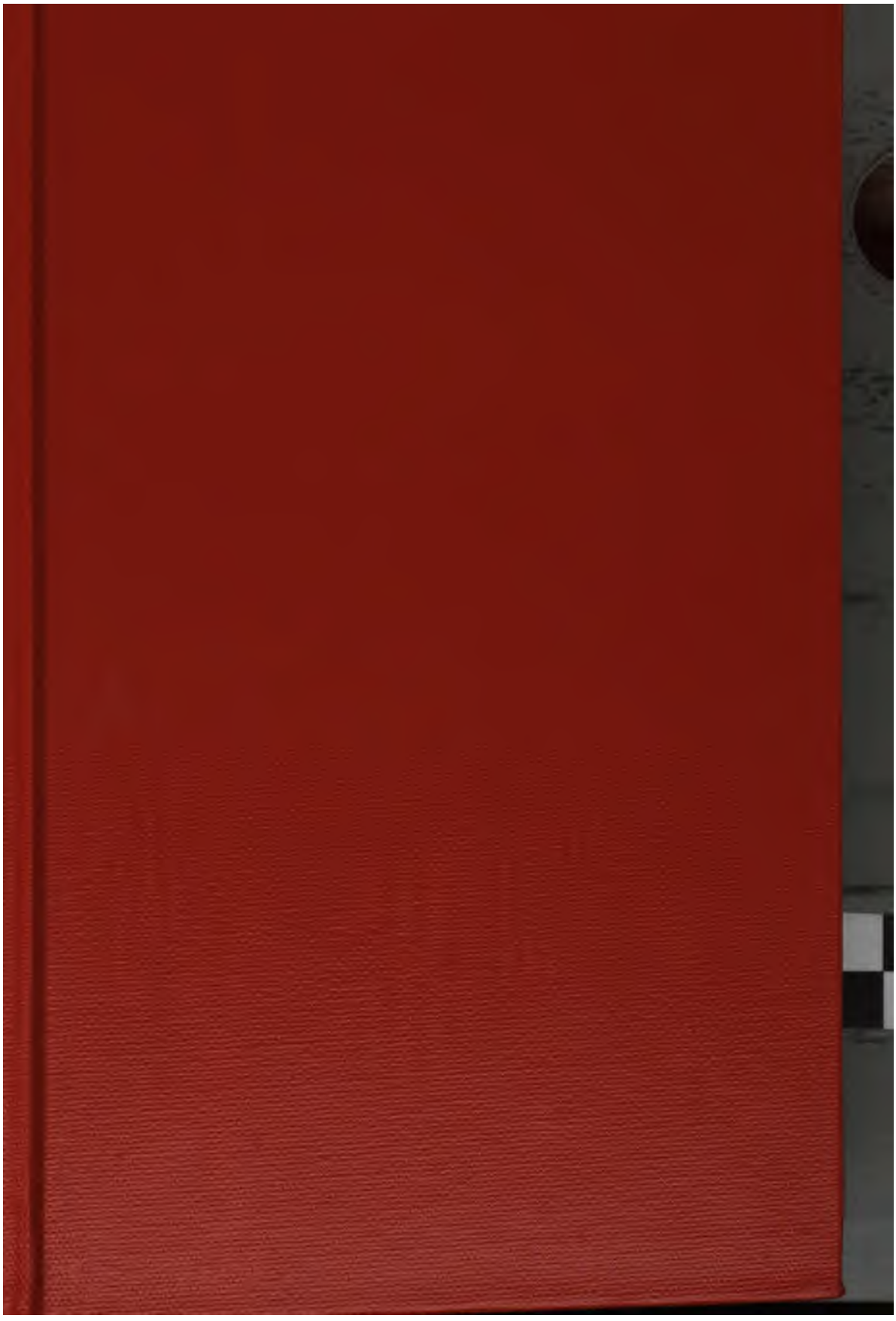

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Theology

OF

The Westminster Symbols,

A COMMENTARY

HISTORICAL, DOCTRINAL, PRACTICAL,

ON THE

CONFESSION OF FAITH AND CATECHISMS AND THE RELATED FORMULARIES OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES.

BY

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COLUMBUS, OHIO,
1900

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As to what relates to the preſent Treatiſe, *I am not ignorant, that many eminent and learned* Divines, *far beyond whatever I could profeſſ, have beatten this path, and travelled round the world of* Polemick Divinity. *But their writings being ſo Voluminous and large, that he who deſires to have a full ſight at one look of the chief controverſies, can no more have it, than a man from the Peak of* Teneriff, *can get a clear ſight of the whole Globe of the Earth. Which things, though they be principally worth the knowing, nevertheleſſ, for ſo much as their number, and variety are an impediment to themſelves, and the multiplicity of matter, makes the mind abruptly flit from one thing to another. Therefore I have imitated* Geographers, *who after they have ſurveyed the whole Globe of the Earth, draw Univerſal deſcriptions thereof, and comprehend the whole image of that great* Terra-queous Body *within a narrow circumference of a* Card *or* Mapp. *In ſo doing, I may perhaps contribute ſome what towards the ſatisfaction of ſome, who neither can, nor are able, to trace the wearieſome foot ſteps, of thoſe eminent Divines, who have written fully.**

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*From the Epistle Dedicatory to *Truth's Victory over Error*, the first Commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith; as published by George Sinclare, 1684, from notes of the Latin lectures of Dr. David Dickson, Professor of Divinity, delivered in Edinburgh, 1650–1663. Dr. Dickson was also the chief author of the *Sum of Saving Knowledge*.

The Seal of the Assembly.

Original preserved in a private collection in England.

PREFACE.

This volume aims to set forth in systematic form the substance of the Theology embodied in the series of confessional documents drafted and promulgated by the Westminster Assembly. In order to present that Theology in its completeness, it has been found essential not only to include the doctrinal teaching of the two Catechisms as well as that of the Confession of Faith, but also to introduce, wherever obviously contributory, the theological material furnished in the Form of Government and the Directory for Worship. Frequent use has also been made of the Sum of Saving Knowledge, a brief compendium of Christian doctrine which, although without known ecclesiastical warrant, was early incorporated with the Symbols in Scotland, and has for two centuries retained its place among them as an illustrative exposition.

It will be obvious that the comprehensive system of doctrine contained in these documents can be fully appreciated only as the Westminster Symbols are placed in their proper historical setting—in their vital relationship to the antecedent development and formulation of doctrinal beliefs in Great Britain, and also to the teachings of preceding Protestant symbolism on the Continent. The major creeds of both these groups have therefore been freely utilized by way of illustrative comparison, with respect partly to their occasional antagonisms, but mainly to their more fundamental and striking points of agreement. The chief formularies of the Roman church, those of the Greek church, and also the three ancient creeds of ecumenical Christendom, have in like manner been brought into service, so far as they could be made helpful in the exposition of specific doctrines. Some of the more or less defective or erratic creeds which sprang into existence during the agitations and conflicts of the Reformation, have also been quoted by way of illustration.

The emendations which in more recent times have been made in the Symbols, especially by American Presbyterianism, and also

the important deliverances and declaratory acts of Scotch and English Presbyterianism concerning matters of doctrine, and all suggested revisions of the Symbols, have so far as serviceable been incorporated or indicated in this exposition. Previous commentaries on the Confession or Catechisms, and also the theological writings of the more conspicuous members of the Assembly, so far as accessible, and those of later Presbyterian authors, British and American, have likewise been carefully consulted in its preparation.

In compressing the studies of many years in a single volume such as this, the author has been constrained for the most part rather to set forth conclusions than to present in detail the evidences and reasonings on which such conclusions are based. Nor has he deemed it advisable, except in a few conspicuous instances, to name the various authorities by which these conclusions are in his judgment sustained or fortified. The most important literature of the subject is not difficult of access to any diligent student. In addition to the numerous references appearing in the index, a brief bibliography may be found at the close of the volume.

In such presentation of the Westminster Theology, the author has hoped first of all to contribute to a more intelligent acquaintance with the contents of this important group of confessional documents, to correct current prejudice and inconsiderate criticism respecting them, and to secure some just appreciation of their large historical and theological significance, as among the most conspicuous formularies of Christendom. He has also desired not merely to set forth the Presbyterian theology of the seventeenth century as embodied in these Symbols, but as well to indicate though only in outline the interesting evolution of that theology from the historic germ, to describe its normal growth through the succeeding ages, and to exhibit as far as practicable its remarkable effect and fruitage as seen in the beliefs and teachings of living Presbyterianism. And it may be added that in this exposition it has been his constant purpose, not merely to describe the articles of a creed or the dicta of a church or school, however interesting or important, but rather by this method to make more manifest in its comprehensiveness what he believes to be the essential truth of the common Christianity.

He has also hoped that this excursion in the field of particular

symbolism may both incite to similar excursions in other equally interesting fields, and serve to direct attention more strongly to that broader domain of comparative and general symbolism, which in his judgment constitutes at present the most interesting and nutritious department in the history of the Christian Church. It is his firm belief that such symbolic studies, diligently and conscientiously pursued in an irenic spirit, will tend more and more helpfully to bring into clearer light, not the small distinctions and controversies of Protestantism, but rather those grand underlying unities which constitute its chief strength and excellence,—unities which must be appreciated in much larger measure before Protestantism can accomplish its supreme mission of evangelizing the world for Christ.

That this commentary may be found to be free from all narrow partizanship or offensive dogmatism, and at the same time from all tendency to compromise or disparage any among the essential elements in evangelical belief, and may therefore tend to stimulate a like moderation in others, has been the constant and earnest aspiration of the author. In this spirit and hope he commends it first of all to those who for a generation have been his pupils in the department of Christian Doctrine, and to the younger ministers in the various Presbyterian communions,—trusting that it may prove a valuable help in the apprehension and the proclamation of that supreme Truth of God, which it is the solemn vocation of their lives to make known to men. Nor is he without hope that this volume may find its way into our theological seminaries, as a helpful manual or book of reference, treating—though summarily—all or nearly all of the doctrinal topics ordinarily studied in such institutions.

After half a century of sincere and diligent investigation, the writer of these pages rests in the matured conviction that Systematic Theology, clearly apprehended, well organized, positive in essential substance, irenic in temper, and as impregnable as supreme loyalty to inspired Scripture can make it, is as indispensable to the vigor and success, and even to the healthful life of evangelical Christianity, as the osseous structure is to the human frame. He is profoundly convinced that all attempts to decry or compromise or exclude such theology, whether by the disparaging or ignoring of the venerated creeds of Christendom

or otherwise, will end only in disappointment or in irreparable mischief. Especially does he cherish the hope that the Presbyterian Church in all its branches may continue to be, as for two centuries and more it has eminently been, the Church of the Doctrines; holding forth through all the future in their breadth and majesty and convincing power those divine truths, that lofty and substantial system of theology, by which it has been so singularly nourished and strengthened in the past. And in that grand sphere of service for the common Christianity, the venerable Symbols of Westminster, expanded and improved by widening thought and experience, and held forth in that temper of sweet reasonableness commended by the Apostle, must always hold a central and vital place.

***All specially important citations from the Symbols are printed in italics. Quotations from other creeds are indicated by particular reference. Other references to authorities appear, for the convenience of the student, in the body of the text rather than at the bottom of the page.

CONTENTS.

LECTURE FIRST.—HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

SYMBOLISM: NATURE AND USES OF CREEDS: THE CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM: THE SYMBOLS OF WESTMINSTER. 1. SYMBOLISM as a branch of scientific theology: particular and comparative symbolism: aim of these Lectures. 2. The term, doctrine, defined: primary and secondary meanings: history of doctrine. 3. Creeds, confessions, symbols, as expositions of doctrine described. 4. The necessity for creeds, exterior, interior: illustrations of each class. 5. Formation of creeds: limitations and conditions of the process: the ideal creed. 6. Imperfection of creeds; its nature and necessity: question of emendation. 7. Their degree of authoritativeness: boundaries to such authority: loyalty to creeds: two antithetic errors. 8. Objections to creeds: sources of objection: the appropriate answer. 9. HISTORIC CREEDS: the creed element in Scripture: declarations of faith, individual and general. 10. The first creed period: the three ancient creeds described. 11. These creeds studied comparatively: their contents and limitations. 12. Creedless period; A. D. 500 to A. D. 1500: no progress of doctrine: Scholasticism. 13. Second creed period: creeds of the Reformation grouped into classes; enumeration. 14. Protestant creeds studied comparatively: contrast with the ancient symbols: different aim and function. 15. Heretical creeds of this period: Greek and Papal confessions. 16. Second creedless period, since the Reformation: explanation. 17. Comparative symbolism illustrated by this historic review: its scope and value. 18. THE WESTMINSTER SYMBOLS to be specially examined: general character of the British Reformation: antecedent confessions. 19. A new creed needful: political and ecclesiastical occasions. 20. The Westminster Assembly, its constitution, membership and aims: questions before it. 21. Doctrinal work of the Assembly: the Confession and Catechisms: process of formulation. 22. Difficulties confronted: temper and value of the work. 23. The Westminster Symbols in Britain: English and Scotch acceptance: their subsequent position and effect. 24. The Symbols in America: the Adopting Act: conflicting theories of subscription. 25. Their general position: extensive influence: sources of their power. 26. Proposed analysis: order of doctrine: method of inquiry: general object in view. **1–65.**

LECTURE SECOND.—THE HOLY SCRIPTURE.

REVELATION, ITS NATURE AND PROCESS; CONTENTS OF SCRIPTURE: ITS AUTHENTICITY, AUTHORITY AND ADEQUACY: RIGHT AND DUTY OF PRIVATE INTERPRETATION. 1. Protestantism and Scripture: the Symbols start from the point of REVELATION. 2. Man capable of receiving a revelation: the

light and law of nature. 3. Nature and Revelation, how related: natural theology and religion: Revelation essential. 4. Fact and nature of the Revelation given: objections invalid: God the final Judge here. 5. Process of Revelation: INSPIRATION, its nature and extent: grades of inspiration. 6. Alleged errancy of Scripture: the Bible essentially inerrant. 7. This Revelation progressive, historic, final: no other revelation requisite. 8. Contents of Scripture: particular books included: question of the Canon. 9. The apocryphal books, their position and claim: Protestant reasons for rejecting them. 10. CANONICITY further considered: tests objective and subjective: state of the question. 11. Preservation, genuineness, translation and diffusion of the Scriptures: Providence and the Bible: right of translation and circulation. 12. AUTHORITATIVENESS and credibility of Scripture: internal and external evidences: consequent mandatory power. 13. Contrast with churchly traditions, with decrees of councils: adequacy of the Bible: no additional revelation needful. 14. INTERPRETATION: right and duty of private study of Scripture: foundations of this right: grounds of this duty: Church interpretations, how far authoritative: the Roman assumption confuted. 15. Interpreting Scripture by Scripture: province of reason in interpretation: Bible beyond reason. 16. The Spirit interpreting the Word: natural and saving knowledge contrasted: communion with the Spirit essential. 17. Closing survey: completeness and value of the Symbols on this doctrine: their permanent authoritativeness. **66–123.**

LECTURE THIRD.—GOD IN HIS BEING.

THE DIVINE EXISTENCE AND NATURE: ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: THE TRINITY IN GOD. 1. The divine existence affirmed: qualities of this affirmation. 2. Arguments incidentally suggested: proofs from nature, from man: significance of the latter. 3. The unity of God taught: polytheism in all forms illicit. 4. God a self-existent Spirit; personal, fontal, creative. 5. God an absolute Spirit: His dominion original and complete. 6. God an infinite, eternal, unchangeable Spirit. 7. MORAL ATTRIBUTES and NATURE: knowledge of these attributes. 8. The divine wisdom: intelligence, knowledge, wisdom distinctively described. 9. The divine power: God as Cause, and as Will: His original sovereignty. 10. Other moral attributes: divine justice, goodness, truth: analysis of each. 11. Holiness in God: His moral perfection: general doctrine of the attributes. 12. TRINITY in the Godhead: divine unity the underlying fact: such unity taught. 13. The term, Person, its significance: its relations to Being: limitations of the term. 14. Differentiating properties: likeness and unlikeness in the Divine Persons. 15. The Trinity interior and exterior: Trinity in the work of redemption. 16. Proof of the doctrine: Scripture and experience: objections noted. 17. Concluding remarks: characteristic qualities of this general doctrine of God: its spiritual elevation and influence. **124–177.**

LECTURE FOURTH.—GOD IN HIS ACTIVITIES.

DIVINE DECREES: CREATION: PROVIDENCE: MORAL ADMINISTRATION. 1. Relations of this general topic to preceding doctrine and to the doctrinal scheme consequent: God essentially active. 2. DECREE: conception and

analysis of the term: an eternal, conclusive, effectual purpose. 3. Decree and decrees: significance of this distinction: debates in the Assembly. 4. Order of the decrees: supralapsarian and sublapsarian statements: the question of election. 5. Modes of executing the decrees: second causes efficient: human agency and the divine decrees. 6. Spirit in which the decrees are executed: the moral qualities revealed: divine goodness especially characteristic. 7. CREATION, the first form of divine activity: God as Creator: the Trinity in creation: false theories of creation. 8. Method of creation: the word of power: the phrase, of nothing: the six days or eras in creation. 9. Extent of the creation: the universe material and moral: creation of the angels and of man. 10. Quality of the creation: the existence of evil, natural and spiritual: divine relations to such evil, and especially to sin. 11. End of God in creation, the manifestation of his glory: harmony with other related ends: its legitimacy as supreme end. 12. PROVIDENCE: definition of the term: preserving and governing described: other definitions. 13. Method of God in providence: providence and miracle: providence and secondary causes. 14. Providence and human freedom: sin a fact occurring in providence: the fall permitted in providence: God not the author of sin. 15. Providence over saints, and over the Church: providential discipline and nurture. 16. Prayer a duty and a factor in providence: various theories. 17. Relations of providence to the wicked: discipline and retribution occurring providentially. 18. Providence and moral administration: God also a moral Governor: the doctrine of Moral Government introduced: deficiency of the Symbols at this point. **178–236.**

LECTURE FIFTH.—MAN.

HIS ORIGIN AND NATURE: HIS PROBATION—COVENANT OF WORKS: THE FALL AND ITS ISSUES: ORIGINAL SIN: MANKIND AS DEPRAVED: FREE WILL: MAN UNDER LAW. 1. CREATION of man: true and false conceptions. Unity of the race: its relative antiquity. 2. Constitution of man as created: his physical, mental, moral endowments: the phrase, image of God, defined: original righteousness. 3. The place of man in nature: dominion over the creatures: divine estimate of man. 4. Two specific questions: origin of the soul in man: immortality on the earth. 5. PROBATION: man created under moral law: his power to fulfill law: his will and its mutability. 6. The covenant of life, its nature as a transaction under law: its conditions and objects. 7. Reach of this probation: Adam as a public person: limits of this representation. 8. THE FALL: an event in the divine decree: diversities of view in the Assembly. Permission of sin defined: divine authorship of sin denied. 9. The Fall as a transaction, its historic quality: the temptation, in its nature, incidents and results. 10. The triple curse: its several elements: death the resultant of sin: the earth and humanity involved. 11. ORIGINAL SIN: sinfulness transmitted in the race: theories of transmission: the essential fact. 12. DEPRAVITY, its actual nature: terms and phrases employed in describing it. 13. Objections to the doctrine: value of morality recognized: case of infants dying in infancy, and of the heathen. 14. SIN defined: its essential qualities—transgression, want of conformity, disobedience, selfhood. 15. Strength of this conception: other views of sin compared: defective statements. 16. FREE WILL in man: confessional statements: conflicting theories. 17. Man under law: Moral government, its

nature and scope. 18. Duty of obedience, personal and perpetual: responsibility defined. 19. Failure of man under law: miseries of disobedience: deliverance possible. **237–301.**

LECTURE SIXTH.—CHRIST, THE MEDIATOR.

HIS INCARNATION: HIS PERSON, DIVINE AND HUMAN: HIS MISSION—MEDIATION: HIS MEDIATORIAL OFFICES—PROPHET, PRIEST, KING: HIS HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION. 1. The Christology of the Reformation: affirmation of ancient doctrine: fullness of statement. 2. Eternal existence of Christ as Son of God: the phrase, only begotten. 3. THE INCARNATION: its necessity, nature and characteristics. Significance of the incarnation in theology: fundamental in Christianity: the kenosis. 5. The two natures in Christ: one personality complete in the Immanuel. 6. Perils of error on either side: composite view indispensable: mystery involved. 7. MEDIATION: its nature and necessity, toward both God and man. 8. Christ as Mediator: his qualities, personal, official: complete adaptation. 9. THE THREE OFFICES: mediation thus distributed: reasons and objections. 10. Christ as Prophet: supreme teacher: perfect example. 11. Christ as Priest, and also Sacrifice: source of this conception: its central place in Christian symbolism. Qualifications of Christ as priest, as sacrifice. 12. Satisfaction: the term defined: the essential fact. 13. Christ as King: development of the doctrine: biblical warrant. 14. Nature of his kingship, earthly and heavenly: its extent and glory. 15. THE TWO ESTATES: His estate of humiliation: the earthly life: death and descent into the grave. 16. His estate of exaltation: the resurrection and ascension: his function as Advocate and Intercessor. 18. Final survey: true doctrine vital in Christianity: personal faith requisite. **302–351.**

LECTURE SEVENTH.—THE PLAN OF SALVATION.

SALVATION: THE DIVINE PLAN: COVENANT OF REDEMPTION: THE GOSPEL: ELECTION: REPROBATION. 1. Salvation defined: its need and nature. 2. PLAN OF SALVATION, the phrase defined: plan formed in sovereignty, in grace. 3. Covenant of redemption defined: errors noted. 4. Covenant of works ineffectual: a scheme of deliverance necessary: the covenant of grace. 5. Historical unfolding of the plan of salvation: types and promises realized in Christ. 6. THE GOSPEL defined, as a system of revealed truth concerning salvation. 7. This Gospel contrasted with other schemes of salvation: its manifest superiority. 8. The Gospel as an offer: its aim and scope. 9. Later conceptions of the Gospel in both aspects: improvements noted. 10. Plan of Salvation applied: doctrine of ELECTION introduced: order of the decrees again considered. 11. Election defined: election in providence, and in grace. 12. Divine motive in election: the divine purpose formed in love. 13. Ends sought in such election: holiness—usefulness: false views corrected. 14. Human relations and agency: election in some sense conditioned: human responsibility. 15. REPROBATION, an election unto condemnation: fact of reprobation—its ground: Preterition: teaching of the symbols. 16. Concluding view of the divine Plan: God justified in the issues of his gracious purpose. **352–404.**

LECTURE EIGHTH.—THE PROCESS OF SALVATION.

SALVATION A PROCESS: THE HOLY SPIRIT AS AGENT: MAN AS SALVABLE: EFFECTUAL CALLING—REGENERATION: JUSTIFICATION: SANCTIFICATION. 1. Preliminary suggestions: the process personal throughout: agents engaged. 2. THE SPIRIT as a personal agent: his full personality established. 3. Development of doctrine concerning the Spirit: proposed addition to the Symbols. 4. His special agency in the sphere of salvation: his supremacy therein. 5. Objections answered: the doctrine fundamental in Christianity. 6. The human person in this process: MAN as salvable. 7. Common operations of the Spirit: common grace, its nature and extent. 8. EFFECTUAL CALLING: regeneration by the Spirit, its nature: Conversion. 9. Revealed truth as related to regeneration: sacraments and other instrumentalities. 10. JUSTIFICATION defined: its ground in Christ only: justifying faith. 11. Elements of justification—pardon and acceptance. 12. False theories of justification: historic sketch of the doctrine: its vital moment. 13. ADOPTION, its nature: relations to justification. 14. SANCTIFICATION, its nature as a process: the human agent concerned. 15. Specific questions suggested: the answers given. 16. Concluding summary: Roman and Protestant doctrine of salvation compared. **405–460.**

LECTURE NINTH.—THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CHRISTIANITY A LIFE: FAITH: REPENTANCE: GOOD WORKS: PERSEVERANCE: PERFECTION.—1. The Christian life: Papal and Protestant doctrine compared: form and spirit. 2. GENERAL CONCEPTION of the Christian life: its essential elements: its ideal, motive, law, fruitage. 3. Dependence on the Spirit: trust, obedience, communion requisite. 4. SAVING FAITH defined: creed statements: the Protestant doctrine. 5. Such faith reasonable: its potency in character and life. 6. REPENTANCE defined: its essential elements: false conceptions. 7. Protestant and Papal doctrines of repentance compared: auricular confession and absolution. 8. GOOD WORKS, their nature and worth: Catholic and Protestant statements. 9. Good works, doctrine of the Symbols analyzed: recent explanations. 10. PERSEVERANCE of the saints: the Christian life permanent: grounds of belief. 11. ASSURANCE of salvation; its nature and relations to saving faith. 12. PERFECTION in the Christian life: theories of perfection. Final survey of the whole subject: practical inferences. **461–505.**

LECTURE TENTH.—THE LAW OF GOD.

MORAL LAW: MORAL GOVERNMENT: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: CHRIST AND LAW: LAW AND MORALITY: LAW AND GRACE.—1. Place of law in the Symbols: prominence of this element. 2. Place of law in the Protestant symbols generally, and in Protestant thought. 3. MORAL LAW defined: distinguished from providential administration: Moral law in nature, in Scripture. 4. Uses of the moral law: principles of interpretation. 5. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: general view: specific features: the two tables. 6. First table of the law: first three commandments: duties toward God: the sins forbidden. 7. First table continued: fourth and fifth commandments: the latter transitional: its special character. 8. Second table, duties toward

man murder, adultery, theft, false witness forbidden: influence of the Mosaic code. 9. The tenth commandment transitional: LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT: the divine evolution in Scripture. 10. LAW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: three special characteristics: Christ the supreme revealer of law. 11. Law of God and human morality, affiliations and contrasts: Christian morality supreme. 12. LAW AND GRACE, faith and obedience, their essential harmony: concluding view. **506–555.**

LECTURE ELEVENTH.—CIVIL RELATIONS AND DUTIES.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY—LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE: CIVIL MAGISTRACY: PAPAL JURISDICTION: LAWFUL OATHS: VOWS: MARRIAGE—POLYGAMY—CELIBACY: DIVORCE: CHRISTIANITY IN THE STATE.—1. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY defined—freedom as toward God: its nature and extent. 2. LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE—freedom as toward men: the State and freedom. 3. Failure of the Assembly in applying the doctrine: instances and explanations. 4. CIVIL MAGISTRATE, his sphere and functions: the State and the Church: later view. 5. The Pope in the State—denial of civil jurisdiction. 6. LAWFUL OATHS—their nature and obligation: limitations noted: Jesuitic errors. 7. RELIGIOUS VOWS—nature and worth: legal limitations: monastic vows. 8. MARRIAGE, divine foundation and warrant: limitations: polygamy: concubinage. 9. Celibacy: its historic development: adverse arguments. 10. DIVORCE—dissolution of marriage relation: grounds of divorce: adultery—willful desertion: other grounds: civil divorce. 11. CHRISTIANITY AND THE STATE, their mutual duties: religion a social force: bearings on living issues. The Church supreme in human life. **556–600.**

LECTURE TWELFTH.—THE CHURCH OF GOD.

CHURCH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE: COMMUNION OF SAINTS: CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP: OFFICERS AND GOVERNMENT: DENOMINATIONS: CHURCH COUNCILS: HEADSHIP OF CHRIST: CHURCH GROWTH.—1. Protestant doctrine of the Church: confessional statements: marks of the true Church. 2. Westminster doctrine: Church visible and invisible: distinctions noted. 3. Church in the divine plan; its historic evolution, Patriarchal, Hebraic, Christian. 4. COMMUNION OF SAINTS, its nature and extent: obligations involved. 5. Sects and denominations: how far justifiable. 6. THE PARTICULAR CHURCH: constitution and membership—infant membership. 7. Particular church, its endowments: ministry, oracles, ordinances. 8. Particular church, its organization and government: officers needful. 9. Particular church: power of the keys—right of discipline: church censures. 10. Ecclesiastical organizations: SYNODS AND COUNCILS, their constitution and object. 11. The Presbyterian polity described: its essential qualities: its special values. 12. HEADSHIP OF CHRIST in the Church: the Bible the supreme law. 13. Purity of the Church: impure churches: papal supremacy condemned. 14. The Church, its permanence and growth: laws of growth defined: illicit growth: conditions of success. **601–666.**

LECTURE THIRTEENTH.—SACRAMENTS, ORDINANCES, WORSHIP.

SACRAMENTS, BAPTISM, THE EUCHARIST: SABBATH, SANCTUARY, MEANS

OF GRACE, THE MINISTRY: WORSHIP, PREACHING AND HEARING, PRAISE, PRAYER: RITUAL AND LITURGY.—1. CHRISTIAN SACRAMENTS defined—their nature and authority: papal error. 2. Baptism: its nature, design and mode. 3. Baptism: proper subjects: baptism of infants; biblical warrant; its values. 4. Lord's Supper: its design and uses: Roman and Protestant doctrine: proper participants: other observances. 5. CHRISTIAN ORDINANCES defined: the Sabbath, the Santuary. 6. Ordinances: the Means of grace, Patriarchal, Hebraic, Christian: Protestant usage. 7. Ordinances: the Ministry an ordinance of God: place and functions in the church. 8. CHRISTIAN WORSHIP, nature and grounds: its essential elements. 9. Worship: reading, preachir g, hearing the divine Word. 10. Worship: praise, thanksgiving, confession, prayer. 11. Concluding survey: ritual, liturgy, sacred times, the Christian year. **667–720.**

LECTURE FOURTEENTH—ESCHATOLOGY.

MILLENNIUM: DEATH: IMMORTALITY: PARTICULAR JUDGMENT: THE INTERMEDIATE LIFE: SALVATION AFTER DEATH: FINAL ADVENT: RESURRECTION: GENERAL JUDGMENT: THE ETERNAL ESTATE: THE CONSUMMATION.—1. Eschatology defined: general Protestant doctrine. 2. Westminster Eschatology: The Millennium: general view. 3. Millennium, particular statements: preceding and concurrent events. 4. Death: nature, its theological significance. 5. Immortality: general evidences: speculative and biblical: creed statements. 6. Conditional immortality: annihilationism. 7. The intermediate life: its general characteristics. 8. Opposite theories: purgatory: restorationism: probation after death. 9. Particular judgment at death: nature and effects. 10. Final Advent: occurrence, nature, results. 11. Resurrection of Christ, of the righteous, of all; evidences. 12. General judgment, necessity and nature: Christ the Judge. 13. The eternal estate: Hell and Heaven, nature and duration. 14. The ultimate Consummation: the Kingdom surrendered: God over all. **721–788.**

LECTURE FIFTEENTH.—THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY.

ESTIMATES OF THE ASSEMBLY: ITS WORK REVIEWED: SPECIFIC EXCELLENCES AND DEFECTS: AUTHORITY OF THE SYMBOLS—TOLERATION: CONTINENTAL RELATIONS AND INFLUENCE: THEIR PERMANENCY AND PROPAGATION: RULE OF SUBSCRIPTION: REVISION. 1. Estimates of the Assembly: its general character. 2. Its work reviewed: worship, government, doctrine—general quality. 3. Its doctrinal system, characteristic excellences: extent, order and proportion, moderation, spiritual and ethical quality. 4. Its defects: rules in estimating these: defects inherent in Calvinism: some special defects named, explanation. 5. Ecclesiastical authority of the Symbols: question of toleration. 6. Relation of the Symbols to Protestant symbolism: to continental Protestantism. 7. Their permanence and propagation: rise of hindrances: British Moderatism. 8. Rule of subscription: loyalty to the Symbols, its nature and demands. 9. Revision and emendation, when desirable: requisite conditions. **789–840.**

INDEX AND REFERENCES 841–858

THE WESTMINSTER SYMBOLS.

LECTURE FIRST—HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

SYMBOLISM AS A STUDY: NATURE AND USES OF CREEDS: THE CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM: THE SYMBOLS OF WESTMINSTER.

1. Symbolism defined: Symbolic Theology. Purpose of these Lectures.

Symbolism may be defined as that branch of general theology which treats of the history, contents, teaching and influence of the accepted creeds of the Christian Church. In such treatment these historic symbols are to be studied generally with respect to their sources, position and issues, and also specifically with respect to their statements of particular doctrines, and to their special presentations of the Christian Truth. As each of these creeds or confessions has an individual history, and exhibits peculiar characteristics in structure, contents and spirit, the examination of the individual formulary with reference to such elements, may be styled Particular Symbolism. As the creeds or confessions of the Church, originating at various periods in its development, sustain many interesting relations to each other, both in their outer connections ecclesiastically, and in their interior teaching and tendency, the study of these creeds in such relations, with special reference to their mutual affiliations and contrasts, may be styled Comparative Symbolism. The general aggregate of divine truth obtained by these processes, and especially the scheme of Christian Doctrine thus derived, is in a proper sense of the word, Symbolic Theology.

Standing between Biblical Theology on the one side, and Dogmatic or Systematic Theology on the other, the department of study just defined has uses and values peculiar to itself. Though it deals with past rather than present beliefs, and with terse formularies rather than extended doctrinal systems, it is not on such account to be regarded as either obsolete or unimportant. A

distinct and positive creed, originating in the deepest experience of some Christian body, and representing its most fundamental convictions respecting the essential truths of our holy religion, is in fact, however remote it may be in date or place, far more significant than any system of theology can be, however complete in itself or however eminent in its authorship. And there are many ways in which the study of such creeds, intelligently and carefully pursued, makes special and unique contribution to our knowledge of the Christian Doctrine. Such study brings into view the various modes and forms in which particular truths have at different periods been stated and received within the Church. It illustrates the various methods of combining such truths structurally, according to their historic or theologic relations. It reveals the ordained succession and vital interdependency of the Christian symbols, and exhibits in and through them that sublime evolution of sacred doctrine from the biblical germ, of which systematic theology is in every age the culminating expression. The generic progress of Christian truth and Christian faith through the centuries is often most happily discerned, as it is thus made manifest in the formation and the bright succession of the Christian creeds. Such study also illustrates and interprets the external history of the Church by bringing into just prominence those critical eras, those decisive movements and struggles, in which such creeds have their origin. In fact, the story of the genesis, formation, implanting and diffusion of creeds is sometimes the most important illustrative chapter in the history of the period in which they originated. Further, it is only as we duly estimate their authoritative affirmations, that we comprehend or are prepared to refute the errors or heresies, which in many instances were their originating occasions, and against which they bear their enduring protest. Still further, we may note their practical contribution to ministerial culture and service ; no one can adequately apprehend or expound the accepted doctrines of his own branch of the Church, unless he understands the historic evolution of such doctrines, and appreciates their confessional as well as their intrinsic meaning and value. Symbolic studies also broaden the mind of the Christian scholar, expand his intellectual and moral sympathies, cultivate in him an irenic temper, and set him in more practical and loving relations to all phases of Christian belief, while at the same time they teach him to be supremely loyal to the truth as revealed in Scripture, and to Him who is the true light and life of men. For such reasons it is hardly a mistake to classify symbolic with biblical and dogmatic theology as an equally important factor in ministerial culture, and an inval-

uable help in the skillful and effective proclamation of the divine Truth.

The main purpose of the present series of Lectures is to describe in detail the doctrinal contents of the Symbols of Westminster, including not only the teachings of the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, but also such theological material as appears in the Form of Government, Book of Discipline and Directory for Worship. Such doctrinal contents will be so arranged as to present in full outline and in logical order, the general system of theology incorporated in these Symbols — a system which has been widely recognized as among the most notable theologies of Christendom. Such modifications or emendations of that system as have secured extensive acceptance within the Presbyterian communions, as the result of more recent discussions and discoveries, will also be included in this descriptive survey. It is intended, further, to indicate at all important points the historic relations of the Symbols of Westminster to Christian symbolism in general, and especially to the other doctrinal formularies originating in the fruitful period of the Reformation. Through such studies it is hoped on the one hand that broader and juster views of the doctrinal teachings of the Symbols, as thus defined and organized, may be attained; and on the other hand that a more intelligent appreciation of that comprehensive body of sacred doctrine, represented alike by these and other cognate Protestant symbols, may be gained. It is also hoped more broadly, that such investigation will result in enlarged conceptions and a worthier estimate of the saving truth which constitutes the Gospel in its essence, as accepted and cherished by evangelical Christendom universally. As introductory to the studies thus proposed, some brief consideration of the nature and offices of creeds in general, and a condensed historical survey of the Christian creeds, and particularly of the Westminster Symbols as to their origin and position and influence, will be requisite. These preliminary topics will be the theme of the present Lecture.

2. Doctrine, primary and secondary meanings: History of Doctrine.

As sacred doctrine constitutes, together with essential fact, the material or substance of all Christian creeds, some brief reference to the meaning of that term, and also to the history of Christian doctrine seems needful, by way of further introduction to the proposed study. Primarily the term, doctrine, refers to the didactic element in Scripture itself, and especially to the body of essential and saving truths revealed in

the Scriptures. The Bible is not indeed a book of doctrine exclusively: it is biographic, historic, prophetic, poetical, preceptive and legislative as well as doctrinal. These various constituents are for the most part the divinely arranged vehicles by which its dogmatic teachings are conveyed to the mind—the widely diversified, often picturesque and impressive modes, whereby the truth essential to salvation is transmitted through the intellect to the conscience and the heart. Beneath all varieties of form and aim, the Bible contains a series of instructive disclosures concerning God and man and salvation, which are properly described as its doctrines, and on which its entire structure as a supernatural communication is founded. This doctrinal element is not indeed formulated in the written Word, but is rather held in solution and distributed throughout that Word in boundless variety, and with primal reference to spiritual rather than intellectual effect. The doctrines of the Bible at no point are articulated, or presented to view in one systematic construction, for the reason that the moral and practical ends sought in their disclosure forbid such systematization, and require rather that the divine truth should be given to man in the free, flowing, diffused form in which the Holy Spirit has in fact chosen to present it. Yet we are not to regard these doctrines as any less valuable or vital because of this peculiarity in their form. Doctrine is still the primordial basis on which the entire scheme of grace reposes; it is still the explaining, substantiating, comprehending element in the great scheme of salvation revealed in the inspired Word.

In a secondary sense of the term, doctrine may be defined in general as any human statement or expression of the dogmatic element thus contained primarily in the Scriptures. In this subordinate sphere, the term may be employed to describe even such theological results as individual minds may have reached through personal study of the divine Oracles,—especially if these have been in some measure accepted by other minds as valuable expositions of the truth of God. It is more frequently used to indicate such statements of that truth as have commanded the assent of many minds, or have found more or less authoritative acceptance in any Christian body. Still more broadly, the term refers to those statements of biblical truth which have been received by extensive sections of the Church as containing the more vital or essential elements in the Gospel, and eminently to those which have been so regarded and approved by the Church Catholic and Universal.

One of the signal qualities of Christianity, as distinguished

from the natural faiths of the world, appears in the fact that it is supremely a doctrinal and indoctrinating religion,—resting primarily on the body of profound and saving truth revealed in the Scriptures respecting God and man, and eminently respecting salvation as the great need and desire of the race,—resting secondarily on that body of truth as progressively discerned and evolved authoritatively by the living church. The study of the history of such doctrinal discovery and evolution, in all the diversified aspects which it has assumed in the developing life of Christendom, is an indispensable preliminary to the intelligent apprehension of the contents and purpose of the Christian confessions. The process which Hagenbach describes as the formation, the deformation, and the reformation of dogma—the first discovery of sacred truth as set forth in the Bible, the progressive unfolding of such truth in the presence of error and often in conflict with it, and the gradual expansion and completion of truth in its more essential and enduring forms—must of necessity precede any authoritative statement of such truth in church formularies. How much is involved in this study, in all its departments, can be known only to one who has zealously undertaken and faithfully pursued it. It includes an extensive acquaintance with the external history of the church, and especially with those significant eras when questions of doctrine excited universal interest, and vitally influenced the life and career of that divine organism. It includes specific knowledge of the men who became the representatives of sound doctrine or of heresy respectively, and of the parties which from time to time arose within the church around such doctrinal issues. It includes specific knowledge also of the multiplied forms of opposition and unbelief, which at various periods have assailed the church, and against which its creeds have been erected as commanding barriers. It includes also such knowledge of dogmatic theology as will enable the student not only to locate and estimate rightly the particular issues involved, but likewise to discern the relation of such issues to that aggregate of sacred doctrine in which the specific truths of religion find their legitimate place. Much more than this, which cannot now be named, is involved in such historic study. It is important here merely to note the general fact that it is only as such development of doctrine is known and appreciated,—as the *credenda* of the Christian system are thus properly discerned in their progressive manifestations, that it becomes practicable to estimate duly the extensive confessional material which constitutes so unique an element in organic Christianity.

3. Creeds, Confessions, Symbols defined.

Creeds or confessions may be defined as concrete expressions of sacred doctrine, so far as such doctrine has been comprehended and determined authoritatively within the church. They may be limited to the statement of such main facts, or of such cardinal principia of faith, as are believed by the church to be fundamental in the Christian scheme. They may express, in some accepted form of words, the belief of the church in certain particular truths, or departments of truth, or in the entire series of truths which lie at the foundation of the Gospel. They may be so far narrowed in contents and aim as to set forth simply what is peculiar in the belief of some branch or division of the church, as distinguished from other like organizations. In general, the creed of any body of believers may be described as the joint belief of that body respecting some doctrine or doctrines taught in Scripture, expressed in set form, and authoritatively presented by it to the world. It will be noted that, whatever their scope or their object, creeds are essentially churchly in their origin and associations: they emanate from the church, are designed primarily for the church, and are sealed and sanctioned by church endorsement. Even the Apostles' Creed and the Symbolum Quicunque are not exceptions, although individual rather than churchly in their form, since they have come into authoritativeness only through their almost universal acceptance in the various organized divisions of Christendom.

The term, Creed, is sometimes employed in a subordinate sense to describe the three symbols of the ancient Church, in contrast with the more elaborate symbols of the period of the Reformation, which for the sake of distinction are styled Confessions. The former are brief, simple, chiefly historical: the latter more extensive, complex, dogmatic. The former are more private and personal: the latter more general and churchly, representing organized rather than individual testimony. The former were employed chiefly in connection with worship: the latter were theological documents, designed to expound or to sustain some existing belief. The Creeds originated chiefly during the era when the church was defining and clarifying its faith in its fundamental unities: the Confessions were the outgrowth of a period when the churches were announcing or defending their respective faiths, amid comparative contrasts and antagonisms. Yet both alike are summaries of what was believed to be essential truth as revealed in the divine Word, and are regarded as obligatory upon those who profess to be guided by that Word in their belief.

In modern usage, creeds or confessions are viewed chiefly as formularies to be assented to in connection with admission into the church, or with the assumption of official responsibility within the church. In the first instance they involve a formal expression of personal faith in the doctrines incorporated in the formulary; in the second, a covenant of personal or official loyalty to these doctrines as thus formulated. In most Protestant communions the latter is the chief use,—many of these communions requiring from private members no declaration of belief beyond the acceptance of a few primary truths, such as are held in common by all Christians. In a broader sense, a creed or confession is a declaration of faith on the part of the church itself—a declaration made in the presence of other Christian churches, or in opposition to some current form of heresy, or as an acknowledgement of Christian truth in the presence of the unbelieving world. Regarded as regulative guides of the church or of its officers, creeds or confessions have been styled Rules of Faith or Rules of Doctrine or, as in the early church, Canons of Belief. Viewed as marks or badges of discipleship or as outward testimonies like banners, creeds have been styled Symbols, as representing symbolically, or in concrete and suggestive form, the distinguishing belief and teaching of the church.

4. Necessity for creeds, exterior and interior; their value.

Creeds as thus defined are hardly less essential than are doctrines to the life and welfare of the church. There are both exterior and interior necessities which call for their construction and their promulgation. One prominent element in the exterior necessity may be seen in the relation, whether of likeness or of contrast, which any particular church may sustain to other Christian churches, or to the whole body of believers. In many instances, creeds have been the expressions or indices of agreement; occasionally they have been expressions and indices of differences more or less extensive, separating the body making such confession from other branches in the one household of faith. In such cases, they may become earnest, powerful testimonies to truth which other communions are failing to regard, or even solemn and effective protests against errors which have been admitted or harbored in such communions. For example, the confessions of the Reformation were largely framed on one side to indicate the special doctrines, or conceptions of the common doctrine, as held by particular bodies of Protestants, and on the other to set forth the truth of the Gospel as held by all alike, in opposition to the heresies and corruptions of Rome.

The object of these creeds, as a high authority has well said, was to give an authentic account of the doctrine which each church regarded as sanctioned by the Scriptures, and would be understood as prepared to teach among the people,—and this in order to bring out clearly the Christian and evangelical character of the Reformation teaching in general, and wipe off aspersions and slanders. Such an object can not cease in any age to be important.

Another form of exterior necessity may be seen in the peculiar function of creeds with respect to the unbelieving world. The church of Christ needs always to protect itself against the misrepresentation of what it believes, and against the imputation to it of what it does not believe, as well as against all slanderous arraignment of its spirit, purposes and character. To defend itself against such injurious statements of its faith, the church must make that faith clearly and authoritatively known to all men. It has indeed many other methods of securing this end; its ministry, its sacraments, its constitution and life certify constantly and effectively to the substance and influence of its cherished belief. Yet a written, definite, authoritative creed has some special values in this direction which are easily discerned. Here the Christian scheme of doctrine takes on its crystalline, its more matured form; here what is most central and controlling in Christianity is brought into vivid prominence; here error and falsehood receive their most decisive refutation. And this testimony is the more effective because it is so permanent, continuing to make itself heard when other teachers may have ceased to speak,—because it is so faithful, when other teachers may be led through fear or through defection to be silent,—because it often convinces and educates where other teachers are ignored or resisted.

The interior necessity for creeds appears in the important functions which they sustain to the inward condition, experience and growth of the church. In their catechetical form they furnish invaluable aid in the instruction and training of the young within the household of faith: it may indeed be questioned whether the catechisms of Protestantism have not done more to determine the accepted faith of evangelical Christendom, than the more elaborate symbols which have more conspicuously represented the doctrines held by the churches during the Reformation. Creeds serve also in the indoctrination of the church at large, guiding disciples of every grade in their apprehension and statement of the common truth, and aiding them in the defense and the conservation of that truth. They assist the church in estimating current opinion, in detecting and eliminating error, in sustaining itself against heresy.

They both regulate and test the teaching of the ministry, furnish a safeguard against false doctrine, aid in unifying the common faith, and do much both to make the church one, and to inspire and confirm it in its appointed work. These interior ministries of creeds are even more valuable than are the exterior services already named. Whatever objection may be urged against the formation or use of such symbols, or whatever mischiefs may have resulted from their perversion or abuse, there can be no real question as to their priceless worth as elements in the constitution and life of the church. Nor are these necessities any less real or essential because the influence of such confessions is so largely silent and unobserved. The simple presence of a strong, massive, proportionate, authoritative creed is itself a most potent element in church life, even though that power be never invoked to put down error, or to control pernicious tendencies in doctrine. Churches which have such creeds know their value, and would be slow to dispense with them: churches which have no creeds, or but slight or vague creeds, too often find that the liabilities from which they suppose themselves to be free, are far less significant than the evils to which their comparatively creedless condition exposes them.

Bannerman (Church of Christ) defines the function of creeds or confessions as threefold,—holding the truth, teaching the truth, and witnessing and protesting in behalf of the truth. Within its own pale, the church holds the truth of Scripture in its creed,—as he says—as the basis of its union, the formal representative of its faith, and the assurance of the soundness of its profession. Within that pale, it also teaches the truth authoritatively by such public summary of the doctrine it holds, as being in accordance with the Word of God. Outside of that pale, he adds, the church by its creed bears important testimony for the truth as against the error or unbelief of the world. The extent and the purpose of such formulation and exposition of church belief will vary widely according to the nature of the inward or outward exigency; and also according to the position and prominence of the church on one hand, and on the other to the accuracy, fullness, and spiritual effectiveness of the belief thus formulated.

5. Formulation of creeds; limitations and conditions: the ideal creed.

Under the pressure of such necessities, external and internal, the Christian church has been constrained in every age to mold or to proclaim its conscious faith in forms sufficiently full and definite to meet from time to time its growing needs. The question whether it could maintain its existence without such formularies is practically answered by

the historic fact that it has never chosen to exist without them, and by the further fact that the periods in which it has been most indifferent to creeds, have invariably been periods of decline into lethargy or into error. The general truth is that the church has effloresced into creeds as naturally as a healthful oak expresses and represents itself in acorns. The process in all its forms and stages has been one of transcendent interest. The confessions found in Scripture, brief, concerned with central facts only, suffused with spiritual feeling, are chiefly a suggestive series of declarations of individual faith or trust. In like manner the oldest Christian creed, especially in its earlier forms, is simply a recital by the individual believer of the great central facts or verities of the Christian system. When heresies began to arise within the church, and these central facts or verities came to be perverted by speculation or set aside for the sake of theologic theory, the creeds such as that of Nicaea, framed in order to sustain or preserve vital doctrine, became more ample, elaborate and didactic. During the period of the Reformation, the church confessions assumed a still more elaborate and doctrinal character, growing in some instances almost to the dimensions of a system of theology. The warm glow of feeling, the mere clinging to fact, the simplicity of structure, gave way to an unimpassioned statement of truth, to balanced propositions and comprehensive combinations in structure, and to a dogmatic quality quite in contrast with the more primitive symbols. Among these later formularies a striking law of growth is also apparent, not only joining each creed by living cords to its predecessors in the series, but often introducing in each successor some fresh aspect of doctrine or belief not heretofore distinctly affirmed.

Numerous limitations which can not be named here, must appear at every stage in a process so complex and delicate. Brief reference to one or two of these may suffice. The most fundamental lies in the nature of human language, regarded as the medium for the expression of spiritual truth. At the best, the language of man can only incorporate in very inadequate measure the great verities of the Gospel. In Revelation itself the Holy Spirit appears to struggle with the inadequacies of human speech, and to seize on a wide variety of phrases, images, similitudes, in order to set forth through their combination what no words of man seem able fully to express. And in even the most elaborate compilations of doctrine, fashioned on the basis of Scripture, the inadequacy of words becomes still more apparent. The physical element in language limits and discolors the spiritual fact, and at the last

we are obliged to confess that the truth has been rather shadowed forth than fully expressed. All creeds, like all theological systems, are formed under this limitation of speech, and like the dogmas they embody or represent, are at best but partial declarations of what is really believed.

A kindred limitation is apparent in all human thinking on divine themes. The mind of man, the mind even of the church, can never justly claim that it has adequately possessed itself of the truth of God as revealed in his Word. The embarrassments of a finite intellect, and of such intellect as affected by sin, are far deeper than those growing out of human language. These embarrassments force themselves painfully into view whenever the attempt is made to formulate any cardinal element in our faith. The atonement, for illustration, stands out prominently as a central fact in the Gospel; and men may succeed in throwing the great fact into some form of words: they may describe it under some varieties of imagery or illustration, which will in some degree enable us to apprehend and hold it as a cardinal tenet of grace. Yet every thoughtful student realizes that there are mysteries in the sublime reality of the atonement, peculiar and inexplicable relations shadowed forth in it, which no human mind has ever comprehended,—before which the highest thought of man is forever baffled. And if a truth like this is to be formally stated in a doctrinal symbol, the fact must be recognized at the outset that every such statement will carry in it not only evidences of the inadequacy of language, but also traces of the finiteness and the imperfectness of the minds that unite in framing it. The claim of the Roman church that it is so inhabited by the Holy Spirit as to be lifted above such limitatations—so guided by him that its confessional declarations are in themselves complete and irreformable, is one which is contradicted alike by history and by sound philosophy. On the other hand the objection of current agnosticism, based on the fact that all human knowledge of divine things is only relative and approximate, can not be regarded as forever precluding all attempts at creed formulation. The rational and practical rule in the case lies between these two delusive extremes of infallibility and impossibility.

Waiving all reference to various limitations in circumstance and condition, we may pause for a moment to contemplate in outline the ideal of a perfect Christian creed,—one freed so far as possible from all such narrowing limitations. As to its material, such a creed will incorporate, not religious truth in general, but the most essential truth and doctrine contained in Holy Scripture; especially

such elements of sound doctrine as are most cardinal in themselves, and most vitally tributary to the support and nurture of faith within the church. In a subordinate sense, it may properly contain also those more particular aspects of sacred truth, or of correspondent duty, which are especially held and cherished as important by any branch or division of the church. As to form and style, the ideal creed will present such truth in just proportions and in due method and order: it will be neither technical nor abstract nor highly elaborated, but plain and popular in structure; its statements simple rather than complex, its language largely biblical, and its composition adjusted throughout to the apprehension of those for whom it is framed. As to extent, it will be neither so brief as to fail of defining adequately the truth or doctrine professed, nor so expanded as to become burdensome or bewildering to those who avow it: terse, positive and comprehensive in its affirmations, and every way sufficient and commanding as an exposition of the accepted faith. As to spirit, such a creed will be neither dogmatic nor partisan, but irenic and winning in influence: composed in no mood of antagonism toward other types of evangelical thought; considerate even in dealing with heresy or with pernicious error; carrying in it no undue tone of assumption, but gentle and peaceable in temper, and contributing not to warfare but to peace—a crystalized expression of the true Communion of Saints. As to purpose, such a creed will aim supremely to express the truth, to commend and defend the truth, and to attract men toward the truth as it is in Christ: becoming at once a banner around which the church can gather with loyal enthusiasm, and a fortress which foes assail in vain; a light steadily shining in a dark place, and a steadfast voice of both counsel and warning; a sacred rule or canon of belief, representing in enduring form that which differentiates Christianity doctrinally from all other religions.

6. Incompleteness of creeds; their development; problem of emendation.

In the presence of such an ideal concept, all existing creeds are easily seen to be marked, in material or form and range, in spirit or purpose, by more or less of incompleteness. It is obvious that, like all theology, they are developed under a law of growth and progress, and that such development can never be regarded as finished. All theology, regarded simply as the human statement or expression in more or less scientific form of what God has first revealed in his inspired Word, is constantly varying and widening in both content and structure, as the human mind gains larger views of the

truth, or sees that truth in wider and juster relations. Even when the constructive principles of theology have been apprehended, and after the main elements in the system have been drawn from the Scriptures, new definitions of doctrine and new combinations of doctrine are still possible. What is seen prepares the way for a clearer discernment of what at first can not be seen; what has been grouped together at one time may by its own imperfection suggest some better method of grouping; what seems at one stage to be perfect, comes to be viewed as imperfect under the light of further study and experience. Christian theology thus exists under a law of growth, and can never be said to be complete. The affirmation of Macaulay that theology, revealed as well as natural, is not of the nature of a progressive science, is clearly unwarranted. For while the cardinal teachings of Scripture can not be altered or improved by human ingenuity, the volume of teaching in the Bible is found to be steadily expanding, as the human intelligence increases in capacity; and both the forms and the cogency of revealed doctrine are constantly developing through progressive inquiry and widening knowledge of the Word itself. Christian theology is thus not a stationary and finished, but a steadily advancing science; ever setting the truth of God in fresh lights and relations, discovering new harmonies in that truth, and thus building up, century by century, a temple of sacred doctrine, whose full completion it may not be given to mortal man to behold. The manifest fact is that no century can frame a scheme of doctrine which should justly limit the belief and teaching of succeeding centuries. Each period, each generation, each body of believers may and in some sense must make a theology for itself. To suppose otherwise is to confuse the rudimentary distinction between theology and revelation: it is to fancy each and every council, each and every theologian, infallible.

Creeds are developed under a similar law of growth, and partake of similar incompleteness. A confession adopted as sufficient at any one period may be too brief and rudimentary to describe the more comprehensive or more philosophic faith of a later period. A symbol formed in an era distinctly theological, when the mind of the church is largely occupied with speculative question or debate, may have much in it which an era of greater practical activity, or of comparative indifference to the more recondite aspects of divine truth, will either reject or regard as of little practical moment. A creed shaped during some period of intense controversy, and drafted for the special purpose of contradicting or of crushing out some rising heresy, will inevitably carry with

it traces of the conflict in which it arose, and may consequently fail to command the intelligent and cordial assent of the church after the period of excitement is over, and the controversy has come to a decisive close. In like manner, a creed which may be regarded as the best possible expression of the belief of the church in any given land or age, will indicate at many points its particular place and date, and may consequently become inadequate to represent the living convictions of other churches in other lands and times. And beyond all this, what is illustrated in all theology as a growth largely personal and provincial, and always limited by human narrowness, must appear no less really or vividly in all creeds. In the broadest sense, to affirm that such creeds are imperfect, is simply to assert that they are human. The *Placuit Spiritui Sancto et Nobis*, of the primitive Council at Jerusalem, though appropriated by the Vatican, can not rightly be employed to describe the decisions of any subsequent council, whether in the early church or in more modern times.

It is a just inference from this view of the imperfectness of all human compilations of belief, that no church, in planting itself on any given formula, agrees by that act to hold the said formula unchanged and unrevised through all time. There is indeed, as we have seen, a certain sacredness attaching to old symbols like those of the ancient church—symbols that have come to be accepted widely, and are held in common by many different branches of the one church of Christ—which seems to forbid attempts to alter or expand or improve them by whatever process. A creed which has become the heritage in some sense of the common Christianity, ought not to be torn to pieces, or changed by the introduction of improvements according to the judgment of this or that particular denomination, until its historical quality is destroyed, and the aroma of antiquity in it is altogether exhaled. The same principle would apply in the case of a confession held extensively even by any main division of the church, such as the Lutheran or the Reformed, or in the case of such doctrinal symbols as those of Westminster, as now received and held by many Presbyterian bodies. It would be more in harmony with the fitness of things for any such communion to make a new creed or declaration for itself, presenting in its own chosen words the accepted scheme of doctrine, than to alter at essential points such historic symbols so as to suit its own specialties in belief.

Yet the general right of emendation is one which can not be denied. This right may be exercised, as in some historic instances, by the adoption of additional definitions or declarations,

designed to meet objection or to remove obscurity. In any such case, the original creed is to be received in the light of such explanatory additions, and is obligatory only so far as these extend. This right is certainly admissible, even if carried much farther than this. The Westminster Assembly itself at first undertook such revision and emendation of an existing symbol, and only abandoned the effort after discovering that the framing of a new confession would be an easier and more acceptable task, than so radical an alteration of that symbol as was judged to be needful in order to make it a fit exponent of what was then regarded as the national belief. It is obvious, however, that the justifying reasons for such emendation must be clear, urgent, decisive. Some degree of permanence is essential to the usefulness or influence of any creed. Slight or frequent changes are to be avoided as practically destructive. The frequent agitation of the question of amendment is certain to unsettle popular confidence in the creed itself. Errors or defects which are minor may therefore be borne with; even serious imperfections in statement or in construction may be endured, when the alternative is likely to be ecclesiastical agitation or conflict, or the wide disturbance of popular faith. It has been urged that, as in the case of some state constitutions, the matter of creed amendment should be brought up at stated intervals, in order to test the confidence of the church in its accepted standards, or to furnish an orderly and peaceful mode of improving them. But the general instinct of the Protestant communions is adverse to any such provision, and their obvious choice is to hold their standards in their primitive form as nearly as possible, and to modify that form only when some serious emergency may demand it. Whenever such an emergency arises, some churches, like our own, have provided in their constitution a legitimate method for making alterations in creed, as in matters of polity or worship.

7. Their authoritativeness: degrees in weight and claim: loyalty defined.

The degree of authoritativeness attaching to all church symbols must be measured by the facts as to their origin, contents and nature. The doctrine of church infallibility as held by the papacy, whether such infallibility lies in the councils of the church, or in the pope as spiritual head over the church, leads inevitably to the conclusion that all canons, decrees, doctrines once enunciated by the church in either way, are beyond all challenge or question. Additions may be made to such decrees, as the developing consciousness of the church may make new discoveries of truth:

further proclamations of doctrine may be needful, to complete the system already held, or to meet errors arising in opposition to the truth. But a creed once proclaimed, resting on the Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Ghost, endorsed by the voice of the church, must according to Rome be viewed as forever infallible, and should be received by all with implicit, unquestioning faith. Protestantism finds infallibility nowhere but in the inspired Word. It maintains in the language of the Confession of Westminster not only that all synods and councils since the days of the Apostles may err, but that many of them have erred; and therefore that, while such synods or councils may be helpful in the elucidation of divine truth, their affirmations however entitled to respect are never to be made the implicit rule of faith or of practice. No other position than this is consistent with the Protestant doctrine as to the supreme authority, the perfect truthfulness and the absolute sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures. The perils involved in that position, such as false interpretation or indifference to church authority or the extreme individualism of reason, are far less serious than the perils involved in the papal view, or in the absolute acceptance of any earthly standard, personal or impersonal, as infallible.

The degree of authoritativeness in any particular creed may be determined by a variety of tests. Among extrinsic sources of such authoritativeness may be named the number and ability and position of the persons who framed the symbol, the circumstances and conditions regulating its formation, the extent to which it has been received and acknowledged, the degree of its present prominence and influence as an accepted representative of the faith of the church. The intrinsic authority of a creed lies in what it is as a statement of truth, when studied in the light of the Scriptures, and tested by the best results of exegetical and theological inquiry The authoritativeness of some creeds obviously wanes with time, even among those who have vowed allegiance to them; and not infrequently they are held up rather as historical insignia of a past faith, or as representatives of old controversy, than as expressions of living thought and present experience. Such symbols may still be insisted upon as strict tests of loyalty to the church, or as standards of individual teaching in the church; they may be invested with an extraneous authority derived from the concentrated will of the body that avows them; and yet their claim to acceptance may be a waning claim, and they may have little real authoritativeness over the individual mind or conscience. To be authoritative in the best sense, a creed must be the cherished

expression of living belief—the utterance and confession of the church as it actually is. It must also be so thoroughly biblical, so saturated throughout with both the teaching and the temper of Scripture, that those who study it shall be drawn spontaneously into acceptance of it by the continuous and positive consciousness that its declarations are substantially the voice and message of the Holy Ghost.

The general question of loyalty to church creeds is indicated sufficiently in what has already been said. Viewed simply in their abstract form as statements of Christian doctrine, made and avowed by some section of the church of Christ, they are entitled to the respect of all who receive that doctrine, and have a right to be accepted and honored as deliberate expressions of the judgment of the household of faith. Acceptance of them in this sense is simply a personal endorsement and acceptation of the truths they contain. But when viewed as doctrinal bases or foundations of an organized church, creeds assume a different character, and are entitled to allegiance of another sort. Here they become a coalescing factor in the organization, a permanent representative of the distinguishing principles on which the organization is based, a test of individual teaching and especially of official qualifications, and a standard around which all who are connected with the organization may properly be expected to gather. Apart from any abstract question as to the use of creeds in such connections and ways, there can be no doubt as to the obligation of all who acquiesce in that use, and who connect themselves with any church under these conditions. The acceptance of the creed here assumes in part the character of a covenant; the confession is made by the individual to and before the church; and loyalty to that church therefore involves true and honest loyalty to the symbol on which the church is based.

There are two practical errors to be avoided here. The first calls for an acceptance of every section and clause of the endorsed creed—an avowal of personal allegiance to every word or phrase, and of obligation to maintain and defend the symbol in each particular. This may be carried so far as to include a tacit agreement not to believe anything that lies outside of the creed or is in conflict with it; it may be regarded as involving an obligation to resist all proposed revisions or emendations; it may even assume a more or less conscious veneration of the creed as if it were perfect, and possibly in some degree inspired. There is a blind allegiance which goes to such extremes as these, and which would require similar blindness in all who should seek admission to the

church, or undertake to represent the church officially. But no argument is necessary to show that such a theory is not only contrary to the spirit and teaching of Protestantism, but is altogether at variance with supreme loyalty to the Word and Truth of God. The attempt to enforce any such theory within the Presbyterian church has always failed, and must always fail, for the simple reason that it is at variance with the fundamental position of our Symbols respecting the supremacy of Scripture, the fallibility of human councils, and the superior obligation of fidelity to personal conscience in all matters of belief.

The opposite error is a latitudinarian indifference to the specific teaching of the creed avowed, or to the covenant implied in a true subscription. While such subscription can obligate no one to be indifferent to the errors or defects of a creed, or to accept that creed in any other way than as an expression or exponent of the doctrine supremely taught in Holy Scripture, as discerned and held by the church, that subscription honestly made will not permit indifference to the recognized rights of such creed, or disregard of its plain and decisive teaching on any essential point of doctrine. If the authoritativeness of such symbols be earthly and human, it is still real and is entitled to respect even from those who conscientiously differ in belief. Certainly such authoritativeness ought to be binding on all, and especially on all in official station, who have once voluntarily accepted any symbol as their own, and have entered into formal covenant to support and proclaim it. No right mind can be in sympathy with that loose, reckless, revolutionary temper, which disregards such obligations, or which uses a position within any given church to subvert the foundations on which that church is conscientiously standing. Honest, open, manly loyalty to these as to all other recognized obligations is a cardinal constituent in every worthy character.

With these definitions and under such limitations, it would seem that no just objection could be raised to the formation or adoption of church creeds. There is indeed a class of persons whose opposition to such doctrinal symbols is only one phase of a broader opposition to all definite and positive statements of biblical truth. In some instances the real feeling in the case is doubtless one of hostility to the truth itself—not merely to the formulated expression of the truth; it is the doctrine of the inspired Word that is opposed, whatever form that doctrine may assume. In others the objection springs rather from a general impression that the Bible itself is sufficient as a creed, or from a kindred impression

8. Objections to creeds: these objections answered.

that there is danger lest these merely human statements shall crowd out or impair the supreme force of the Divine Original. It is alleged that creeds thus tend both to weaken the dominant claim of Scripture, and to bring the church under subordination to some human system, to the injury rather than to the nurture of faith. An adequate answer to such objection may be found in the obvious fact that the Bible itself is so variously interpreted, and that so many forms of error are claiming scriptural warrant. In the presence of such error, the just interpretation of Scripture can be recognized and attained only by careful analysis and condensation of the truth as revealed, in the exact language of philosophy—in scientific form and proportions. Viewed simply in this light, church creeds as systematic statements of the biblical teaching, are often of immeasurable value: in some periods or conditions of the church they may be absolutely indispensable, both as a protection against the incursions of unbelief, and as a source of strength and nutriment to those who believe.

Objection is sometimes based specifically on the recognized imperfection in all such symbols. It is to be admitted that as human constructions all creeds are imperfect,—that many of them are deficient either in their constructive principle, or in their definitions or their phraseology,—that some are too cumbrous to be available as practical tests of belief, others too abstract and speculative, and others too narrow and meager, to meet the ends sought in their formulation or their use. But some of these criticisms apply with equal force to all human expositions of the truth of God: some are illustrations of deficiency such as lies in the nature of all human products: some give occasion merely for correction and improvement, and therefore are arguments, not for rejection but for emendation. Moreover, however defective such symbols are, they are still useful; though they fail to express the totality of truth, they yet express much which is not only truthful but full of spiritual significance. And while it may be easy to reject them because of their imperfection, it will be found far more difficult than is imagined either to do without them or to provide any worthier substitutes.

Objection is also urged on the further ground that such creeds are not merely human and in themselves imperfect, but also, even in their best forms and especially when largely specialized and minute in contents, are fetters upon liberty of thought, and therefore hindrances to the free and full development of the truth, as contained in the Bible. It is alleged that men are unduly hampered by such confessional declarations,—that they are sometimes held

back from legitimate investigation, and in others are led to conceal their real beliefs, or are tempted into an advocacy which is not entirely sincere. So far as creeds do in fact produce such results, they may become injurious, rather than beneficial to the church. But these are by no means necessary consequences, nor are the creeds always at fault when they do occur. A true, clear, just creed is far more likely to be a stimulant than a hindrance to liberty of thought; it is more likely to quicken investigation than to repress it. Is it not an obvious fact in the history of Protestantism, that the churches which possess the broadest and strongest creeds, have been the churches in which the largest freedom of thought has been not only granted but exercised?

Still further objection is based upon the wrong use of creeds, and especially upon the help they may afford to an assuming dogmatism and to ecclesiastical tyranny. It is admitted that church symbols have in some instances been so used,—that they have been put forward and exalted by bigots as if perfect,—that church authorities have wielded them as scourges to repress free conviction or punish personal error,—that they have at times played no small part in that experience of religious tyranny through which our Christianity has passed, and in some measure is still passing. But these issues are hardly more attributable to creeds than to the Bible itself, or to the church of Christ viewed as a living organism. Like all other divine instrumentalities put into human hands, such as the holy sacraments, or the ministerial office, or the keys of the kingdom of heaven, creeds may be thus misused—may be perverted into instruments of injustice. But it is against the perversion of creeds that such objections lie. This possible issue neither destroys their true design nor justifies their rejection: in their proper place and office, they may still prove an inestimable help and blessing to the church. Miller (Creeds and Confessions) argues in defence of creeds as contributing to church unity, as illustrating the position of the church as a depository and witness to saving truth, as candid testimonials of belief addressed to other churches, and as promoting the study of Christian doctrine and the increase of religious knowledge. He argues also from the experience of the church as to the helpfulness of creeds, and from the latitudinarian character and tendency of those who oppose them, and answers effectively various specific objections urged by such opponents.

HISTORIC CREEDS: From this general view of the nature and uses of creeds, and of the conditions under which they are framed

and are to be received, we may now turn to glance summarily at the historical succession of such symbols, enumerating them as they were evolved in chronologic order from the study and experience of the church, and considering them in some of their more obvious connections and bearings. Such a brief glance at the material of what has already been defined as Comparative Symbolism, will prepare the way for a more specific and intelligent examination of the Symbols of Westminster in their historic position and relations.

9. Creed element in Scripture: Biblical declarations of faith.

The creed element in Scripture itself may serve as a proper introduction to such survey. It has already been suggested that the Bible is not a book of doctrinal formulas, but presents itself rather as a record of faith already in exercise,—of beliefs already cherished in experience, and in that form regulating human lives. In the spiritual sphere it is not in the nature of the human mind first to formulate and then to believe. Divine truth enters into men first as a living power, subduing the soul into obedience and devotion, and assuming the shape of objective doctrine only when the soul has contemplated its own experience reflectively, and has discerned the truth as it shines forth in personal consciousness. And the Scriptures in general follow this law, approaching man chiefly on the side of his spiritual nature, and making their teachings manifest in religious effects rather than in didactic formulas. The doctrinal element is indeed everywhere present, but diffusively rather than in concrete shape—as life rather than proposition.

Yet even in the Old Testament we may discern the antetypes and germs of much Christian symbolism. Individual confessions, for example, such as are apparent in the Davidic psalms, in the dedicatory prayer of Solomon, in the profound petition of Daniel, may be found half formulated in many of the sacred books. More general declarations, such as the confession of the people at Sinai or in conjunction with the great miracle of Elijah, occur both in the historical sections and in the prophetical writings. The entire Mosaic ceremonial, as observed by the nation, was a continuous confession of its faith in Him by whom that ceremonial was instituted, and toward whom it was ever pointing the soul of the worshiper. Advanced Judaism, as it calls itself, has in nothing more fully betrayed its lack of loyalty to the holy Word than in its refusal to be bound by that clear and solemn system of doctrine, which is thus embedded actually though in unelaborated statement in the Old Testament.—But in the New Testament this creed

element, as might be anticipated, exists in forms more distinct and more precious, as all sacred doctrine centralizes and glorifies itself in the personal Christ. The Christian church indeed presents itself to our view at first as existing without creeds. The reasons for this are easily seen. The basis of fact on which the primitive Christianity rested, was so clearly understood alike by the church and its enemies,—the simple verities of the Gospel were so distinctly known and avowed by all believers, that there was no real necessity for the statement of these in confessional form, whether for apology or for confirmation. Even during the latest decades of the apostolic century, though antichrists were already appearing, this necessity could hardly be said to have had an existence. The church reposed in its traditional faith, as defined in the apostolic writings, until the rising heresies and the philosophic oppositions of the centuries succeeding constrained it to the formal expression of its cherished belief.

The creed element in the New Testament consists therefore chiefly of individual declarations of faith, called out by something in personal experience, or of ascriptions of trust uttered by the church, resembling hymns rather than formal creeds. Of the first class we have illustrations in the avowal of Nathaniel, John i : 49 ; in the emphatic utterance of Peter, Matthew xvi : 16 ; in the trustful declarations of the apostles generally, Matthew xiv : 33 ; John vi : 68–69 ; in the confession made by the eunuch to Philip, Acts viii : 37 ; in the declaration of Paul to the jailor, Acts xvi : 31. Of the second class instances may be seen in several summaries of apostolic teaching bearing the confessional form, as in Romans x : 9 ; I. Corinthians xv : 3–8 ; I. John iv : 2. The most elaborate of these is found in I. Timothy iii : 16 : in which the mystery of godliness, or the true faith, receives its fullest exposition in a recital of the main facts respecting the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of our Lord. Further allusion to such principia or foundations of belief may be found in Hebrews vi:1–2 ; and Revelation ii:13 ; and possibly in the form of sound words referred to by Paul, II. Timothy, i : 13. Jude also speaks of the faith once delivered to the saints ; Peter alludes to the present truth, as in holy contrast with all human errors ; and Paul regards himself as a steward of certain divine mysteries, I. Corinthians iv : 1 ; Ephesians iii : 9 ; and as having a dispensation or deposit of truth committed unto him, I. Corinthians ix:17. The baptismal formula also may be regarded as a confession of faith in the fundamental mystery of the Trinity, on the part of those who submitted to that ordinance ; and the kindred formula to be used at the

eucharistic supper according to the instruction of Christ, is in some sense a like confession of that cardinal truth of grace, which the bread broken and the wine poured forth so vividly symbolize. The apostolic benedictions certainly embody the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity.

But these examples are not to be pressed too far. While such illustrations indicate clearly the presence in Scripture of what may properly be called a creed element, it still is true that the Bible furnishes no complete formula of religious belief; and that the church existed during the apostolic era and for nearly a century afterward, without any such organized confession of its faith. The tradition that the apostles agreed in preparing the creed which bears their name, is without historic warrant and is to be set aside as a tradition merely: Fisher, Hist. Doct. So long as living men were found who could testify to what the Lord had spoken,—so long as there were actual witnesses to the great facts as well as the fundamental teachings of the common Christianity, more formal creeds than those just mentioned were needless, and the church, so far as we know, made no effort to supply them. The suggestion that the apostolic church had no creed because it could not agree upon any common and acceptable statement of doctrine—a suggestion based on the alleged disparities between the Pauline and Petrine and Johannine conceptions of the Gospel—is clearly without historic warrant.

10. First Creed Period: The three ancient Creeds.

The first creed period may be regarded as including the third, fourth and fifth centuries. During the second century and probably shortly after the decease of John, various forms of antichrist appeared, breaking in openly upon the doctrinal unity of the church, and imperiling the common faith. Some allusions by John, and also by Paul and Peter, (I. John ii: 18-22; iv: 3; II. Thess. ii: 3-7; II. Peter ii: 1; see Epistle of Jude) seem to suggest either the actual rising of such heresies, or at least the subtle development of tendencies toward heresy even in the first century. It is matter of history that, shortly after the departure of the apostolic college, external opposition became more formidable in its aspects, and much more decisive in its assaults. It was natural that the first center of conflict should be found in the person of the Immanuel, and in the associated doctrine of the Trinity. If Christ could be shown to be something less than he had declared himself to be as a divine Mediator,—if the churchly conception of his person could be shaken or overthrown,—if the supernatural element in the doctrine of the Holy Ghost could be rejected, and

the divine Fatherhood in nature and in grace could be proved unworthy of acceptation, then the entire scheme of Christianity, resting on these foundations, would crumble into dust. Error within the church or opposition from without, succeeding at points so cardinal as these, would subvert and destroy the whole system, and the church and the Christian religion would inevitably perish together.

The oldest of the three ancient creeds, bearing the name of the apostles, but not originating with them *membratim articulatimque*, was the first formal attempt by the church to protect herself from such perils by the definite formulation and proclamation of her essential belief at these vital points. It can be traced in its earliest forms to the latter half of the second century. Springing apparently from the baptismal formula, following the order of the holy trinity, confining itself to the main facts of the Gospel,—simple in structure, suffused with devotional feeling and fitted alike to be a standard of belief and a song of adoration,—it still remains, as Augustine described it, a regula of faith both brief and grand, brief in the number of its words, grand in the weight of its declarations. Accepted by both the Eastern church and the Western, and by Romanist and Protestant, incorporated in the Lutheran confessions, and more widely used than any other symbol for both testimony and worship, it will probably stand through all time as alike the primary representative of sacred doctrine, the germ of succeeding creeds, and the uniting and distinguishing confession of all in every age who truly believe in Christ.

Associated with this primitive symbol are the Nicene and the Athanasian creeds; not including as fully as the preceding the general field of divine doctrine, but relating especially to Trinitarianism and Christology. The first represented eastern more than western thought; was prepared at Nicaea, A. D. 325; perfected at Constantinople, A. D. 381; and modified for the western church at the council of Toledo A. D. 589, by the addition of the term, *Filioque*. The second, also oriental in origin, sometimes called from its opening words, Symbolum Quicunque, of uncertain authorship although ascribed to Athanasius, was accepted by no action of the ancient church, yet was widely received, especially for its elaborate exposition of the deity in Christ and of the doctrinal decisions of the first four ecumenical councils generally, and is now ranked, aside from its damnatory clauses, with the other two primitive symbols as expressing still the faith of extensive sections of the Christian church, both Catholic and Protestant. To these may be added the explanatory clauses

appended to the Nicene creed by the council of Chalcedon, A. D. 451; which were designed to exclude still more carefully certain remaining forms of error, and to define still more exactly the orthodox belief respecting the union of two natures in one person in Christ.

11. These Creeds studied comparatively: Their contents and limitations.

Studying these three ancient creeds comparatively, we may note the following particulars. First: they are alike in resting immediately on the words of Scripture, and more specifically on the baptismal formula and the trinitarian benedictions. Recognizing as we have done a certain confessional element specially in the New Testament, both as indicated in individual utterances of belief and as expressed in the forms of sacred devotion, we may readily appreciate this early upspringing of that seed or germ in these more formal affirmations of the accepted faith. Had there been no outward exigencies impelling to such affirmations, we still might presume that the inward needs of the household of faith, such as the training of the young and their entrance into public covenant, and the investiture of persons appointed to office, would have led in time to such symbolic statements of the truth, especially as these were so immediately suggested though not formally given in the divine Word.

Second: these creeds were peculiar in adhering mainly to the historic facts on which the Gospel reposes. In the two latter, we have indeed the results of the prolonged controversies touching such abstruse and speculative questions as the trinity in the divine constitution, and the union of divine and human elements in the composite personality of Christ. Yet even in these statements we see a close adherence to the historic method followed so rigidly in the earliest symbol; the divine facts however mysterious are ever kept in the foreground. In reality we find but little in them after all beyond the simple teaching of Scripture concerning the Father and the work of creation, concerning the Son in his incarnation and mission for our redemption, and concerning the Spirit in his official relations to the church and to the prime blessings of the Christian life.

Third: compared with the later symbols, these original creeds are brief, terse, pointed; stating simply what is most central and omitting much which subsequent confessions have sought to state or to expand. This peculiarity is explained by the fact that the great anthropological and soteriological controversies, and especially the latter, had not yet arisen,—that the grave errors in these departments of theology which figured so largely in subsequent

thought and discussion were as yet undeveloped. The great conflict between Augustinianism and Pelagianism in their several varieties, near as it was in point of time, is hardly recognizable in these creeds. Of the momentous issues which subsequently arose respecting the nature and scope of the work of Christ, and which have so decisively affected all later symbolism, we discover nothing. So far as these later issues are concerned, these ancient creeds are altogether inadequate: they do not define where discrimination is now indispensable: they open or leave open avenues along which the most dangerous error might now enter.

Fourth: they obviously represent simply an existing stage of doctrinal development; they only mark the precise point at which the church had then arrived in its comprehension and exposition of divine truth. They contain no provision for their own enlargement and embody no law of growth, such as would make them by simple expansion the sufficient confessions of the church for succeeding times. Therefore while they can never be superseded in their exposition of the truths they affirm, they may and must make room for other creeds of broader scope and greater completeness, whenever the oppositions of unbelief or the expanding convictions of the people of God may require. They are styled ecumenical or catholic because they are either formally or tacitly accepted by nearly every division of nominal Christendom. Greek and Roman Christianity agree in accepting them with the exception of the single word, *Filioque*; and both are united with the various Protestant communions in acknowledging them as in all else authoritative. But while in some sense they thus form a bond of union between all nominally Christian churches, they betray their imperfection in the fact that they provide no adequate lines of distinction for later ages between what is evangelical and much that is now seen to be formal or even fatally corrupt.

12. Creedless Period, A. D. 500: A. D. 1500. No Progress of Doctrine: Scholasticism.

Passing beyond the fifth century, we come upon a vast creedless period, extending to the sixteenth century, and terminated only by the decisive developments of the Reformation. In general, periods of theological activity and conflict are naturally followed by eras of comparative quiescence,—the faith of the church reposing in the truths decided, and religious thought concerning itself rather with the contemplation or the application of doctrine than with the problem of further expansion. The history of the dark ages illustrates the additional truth that this process may degenerate even into reaction or retrogression,—that such quiescence may change into

indifference, torpor, decadence, worse even than the presence of heresy or open unbelief. The fact is that from the sixth or seventh to the twelfth century, or even later, the church for various causes hardly retained spiritual vitality enough to use or understand the creeds it possessed,—had far too little to undertake any expansion or improvement of these primitive formularies. It is especially to be noted that from the age of Leo and the first Gregory, the thoughts of both teachers and people were turned mainly toward that composite process of ecclesiastical rather than doctrinal development, of which the papacy was the immense and splendid, yet disastrous result. For obvious reasons the influence of the papacy tended steadily to the repression of vigorous and especially progressive thought: it held the mind of the church fixed and moveless in the position in which the ancient creeds had placed it: it allowed no opportunity for the rise of any semblance of heresy. The first centuries of this period were also an era of great external enterprises and outward growth for the church. The standard of the Cross was carried throughout Europe; Africa became the seat of a flourishing, though too formal and consequently evanescent Christianity; the nations of the East heard of Christ, and received the Gospel at the hand of his messengers. The rising conflict between the papacy and the patriarchate, between Rome and Constantinople, also attracted thought and drew off interest from theological issues: and when the great schism came, both the Eastern church and the Western felt themselves under new obligation to adhere tenaciously to the old creeds, and to shut out whatever might seem like an incipient departure from that ancient faith to which each clung as its supreme heritage.

Scholasticism, though a vast advance on the sluggishness and blindness which for five or six centuries had preceded it, yet did not furnish in itself the basis for any new expression of churchly belief or experience in confessional form. For scholasticism was in part simply a revival or restoration of what was best in the thought and experience of the ancient church. It was an attempt to state afresh what had long been believed, and what had been embodied already in the old creeds and the old theologies. It was also in part an effort to analyze this ancient belief,—to define its phrases, state and justify its propositions, and bring out its harmony with current philosophy. It was rather, in a word, the defender of the old than an expositor of any new convictions on the part of the church. It is true that a school of freer thought arose among the scholastics as a natural, perhaps inevitable, antithesis to the main tendencies of theological opinion; and that this freer

movement became an essential antecedent to that great subsequent awakening, theological and spiritual, of which the confessions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the outgrowth. It is also true that in the development of the doctrine of redemption under Anselm we have the central germ of that new Soteriology, that larger and better comprehension of Christ and his work, of which the doctrine of justification by faith as enunciated by Luther was the final expansion. Yet Scholasticism had hardly vigor enough in itself to produce a creed: at best it could only prepare the way for that result in a later and more fruitful age.

These facts illustrate the general truth that the production of creeds by the church is a process peculiar in itself, and dependent on a long series of conditions. There must first be meditation, inquiry, spiritual as well as mental development; the narrownesses or imperfections of old formulas must be discovered through an expanding experience, or possibly through collision with rising and presumptuous heresies. More extensive study of the sacred Oracles must lead on to new views of doctrine, new combinations or adjustments of truth, and in some just sense to new faith. But such changes can record themselves in creeds only after they have first indicated their presence and power in such preparatory ways, or perhaps have justified their right to be accepted through bitter conflict or through the pangs of glorified martyrdom. Other agencies such as state influence may sometimes seem to force out creeds; but these agencies at best are only secondary and occasional. The real creative forces are found only in the expanding thought, the broadening experience, the more matured faith and life of the church.

It has been queried why the great anthropological controversy of the fifth century was not followed, as had occured after the christological conflict of the preceeding century, by some formulated expression of the triumphing Augustinian doctrine. There are some obvious explanations of this fact. Among these may be named the dominating interest of the Eastern church in the trinitarian question in its various aspects, the natural sympathy of the Greek mind with the psychological and ethical theories of Pelagius, the developing antagonism between oriental and occidental Christianity, the increasing inability to bring together any truly ecumenical council, and the declining piety and growing formalism of the period. Had the doctrine of Augustine, triumphant for the hour, been thus crystalized in a strong, clear creed before it began to subside into the modified and weakened forms which it assumed a century or two later, there can be little doubt that such

a creed would have proved a great blessing during the long and blank period which followed. It would have checked the Pelagian currents which in fact ran everywhere like poison through the veins of Christendom: it would have quickened into life the vapid theology of the dark ages; it would have given Scholasticism a different sphere and tone, and have saved the church of Rome from many of those false teachings and tendencies which rendered necessary the Reformation.

13. Second Creed Period: Creeds of the Reformation: Four General Classes.

The second great period of creed formation follows the Reformation, and extends from the earlier part of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century. It might be anticipated that such a stupendous movement as that in which Protestantism originated,—such an eruption of intellectual and spiritual forces long pent up by papal assumption,—such a rapid and unique development of thought and feeling along the higher planes of religious experience, would not occur without some manifestations in the form of creeds as well as of theologies—in new confessions as well as in new modes of worship, or new varieties of church organization. History abundantly confirms the anticipation. The great mental as well as spiritual vigor of the Reformation demonstrated its qualities almost from the outset by the abundance, by the richness, by the permanent character of the church symbols that sprang from it. A brief enumeration of these will justify this statement.

Grouping these symbols into classes, the first to be noticed is the series of Lutheran creeds, originating at the beginning of the Reformation in Germany and representing generically the belief of that group of churches bearing the name of the greatest among the earlier reformers. This series, incorporated in the Book of Concord, embraces the Augsburg Confession, with the Apology or explanation of that Confession, A. D. 1530: the Articles of Smalcald, 1537; and the Formula of Concord, 1577, together with the two Catechisms composed by Luther, 1529. With these are associated in the Book of Concord the three ancient creeds already mentioned,—the whole constituting the representative expression of the Lutheran, so far as distinguished from the Reformed belief.

The second class includes the earlier Reformed confessions of the continent, Swiss, French, Belgic and German. Omitting the personal declarations of Zwingli, the Swiss symbols are the Confession of Basle, A. D. 1534; the first Helvetic Confession, 1536; and the Second Helvetic Confession, 1566. To these may be added

as of secondary importance the Consensus of Zurich, A. D. 1549, and that of Geneva, 1552. Outside of Switzerland, the Gallic Confession, A. D. 1559; the Belgic Confession, 1561; and the Heidelberg Catechism, 1563, represent the main lines of opinion and belief in the Reformed churches of the continent.

The third class embraces the British creeds of the sixteenth century, especially the Scotch Confession of A. D. 1560, with its associated Catechisms; the Thirty-Nine Articles, A. D. 1563; and the Irish Articles which, although prepared at a later date (1615) yet belong by their connections to the symbolism of the century preceding. The Ten Articles of 1536, drafted by Convocation under royal sanction, and the Lambeth Articles, 1595, though without full ecclesiastical authority, may be added to the list,—being appreciated, in the quaint phrase of Fuller, for no more than they are in weight, yet clearly indicating the received doctrine of England in their day on the several topics discussed. These insular creeds may properly be separated in the present survey from the continental symbols of the same period, both because they represent in addition to the general doctrine some special phases and varieties of British thought, and because they all stand in close historical relations to the subsequent Symbols of Westminster.

The fourth class embraces the creeds of the seventeenth century, within the territory of evangelical Protestantism. We may include in this class especially the Arminian Remonstrance, 1610; the Canons of Dort, 1619; and the Catechisms and Confession of Westminster, A. D. 1647–48. So far as the direct development of the Reformation doctrinally during that century is concerned, these symbols and especially the last represent its most elaborate and matured results. The Formula Consensus Helvetici (compiled at Zurich, 1675, by the distinguished Heidegger) though justly characterized as an able and interesting theological statement, never gained more than local and temporary influence, and therefore can hardly claim a place in this series. Omitting from this enumeration various minor symbols which originated in personal opinion or had only provincial circulation or a temporary influence, we may note here the remarkable fecundity, the confessional vigor and propagativeness, displayed in such a series of confessions. Their abundance and variety are not traceable, as has been alleged, to the diversities developed within the common Protestantism: they are rather the indices of its amazing vitality, the proofs of its loyalty to the great principle of private interpretation, the beautiful evidences—when studied comparatively—of the profound and conscious unity in the entire spiritual movement of which they

were the symbolic expression. A hundred ages of papacy could never have originated so vast and so vigorous a growth of Christian knowledge and doctrine as is registered in these creeds. *

Comparing together this remarkable series of Confessions, and considering them in contrast with the creeds of the ancient church, we may note the following points of interest. First: they were confessions rather than creeds. They were not designed primarily to be recited at baptism, or used at the reception of members, or repeated as a part of public worship. With the exception of the catechisms, which for the most part were practical summaries of the truth already embodied in the associated confessions, they were intended rather to be authoritative formulas of Christian truth, as received and held by the various churches,—formulas designed to represent the true doctrine and testify to it, in the presence alike of other divisions of the common Protestantism, and of both Romanism and unbelief. Their main office was thus external rather than internal: they sprang immediately from, and were especially designed to meet, exigencies which lay outside of the witnessing church.

14. Protestant Creeds viewed comparatively: Their confessional quality.

Secondly: as a natural consequence, these confessions were more elaborate and extended than the earlier creeds. They were concerned not merely with those primary facts and those fundamental questions respecting the nature of God as triune and the deity of Christ, which the earlier symbols had embodied. They were designed to express also the results of later thought, and especially of the more earnest and fruitful discussions of the period of the Reformation, respecting the nature of salvation and the mode of justification by grace, together with all the related truths. They were therefore more extensive in content, more philosophic and exact in definition, more complex in structure, and more thoroughly doctrinal throughout. In style and construction as well as in substance, they reflected at every point the remarkable theological qualities and conflicts of the period in which they were produced.

Thirdly: these confessions were agreed substantially in the acceptance of all that was taught in the earlier creeds. They based their affirmations on the old Apostolic and Nicene foundation; they maintained their essential harmony and oneness with the ancient faith as therein embodied. This unity was distinctly asserted in

*For a full list of these Symbols, major and minor, see SCHAFF, Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I. Also, HASE, Libri Symbolici; NIEMEYER, Collectio Confessionum; WINER, Confessions of Christendom; HALL, Harmony of Protestant Confessions, and other compilations.

some of the symbols, as in the Confession of Calvin, prepared for the French church, 1559: On all of the articles which have been decided by ancient councils touching the infinite, spiritual essence of God, and the distinction of the three Persons, and the union of two natures in our Lord Jesus Christ, we receive and agree in all that was therein resolved, as being drawn from the Holy Scriptures. The Lutheran Book of Concord also formally incorporated the three ancient creeds with the distinctive symbols of Lutheranism, as representing the common belief of that division of Protestantism. On these ancient declarations regarded as a foundation, the whole Protestant scheme of belief was erected as a superstructure. The old creeds were the trunk: these numerous and varied confessions were the branches. It has well been suggested that this is a fact of very great significance, both as an illustration of the continued existence and unchanged faith of the Christian Church through the ages, and also as an evidence of its substantial unity in belief, notwithstanding its many circumstantial diversities.

Fourthly: while the earlier symbols presented the faith of the Church in its simple unities, these described that faith in its complex varieties. Not only did they differ at many points from the avowed tenets of Romanism; they differed distinctly at some points and in some important features from each other. While the Lutheran and the Reformed creeds were alike in emphasizing the fundamental doctrines of the common Protestantism, they were considerably unlike in the law of their construction, in the relative prominence given to specific elements, and in the completeness of their execution. The earlier and the later symbols of Lutheranism and, in a still higher degree, of the Reformed churches differed not only in the fullness and elaborateness of their contents and structure, but also to some extent in their presentation of the doctrines themselves. The Reformed symbols especially exhibited a marked and suggestive progress from the Helvetic Confessions onward to the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Symbols. In all, the cardinal truths affirmed were the same for substance, though the definitions, forms and adjustments were often widely unlike.

15. Heretical and Greek and Roman Creeds of this period.

In addition to this series of creeds essentially evangelical, the period is remarkable for the production of other symbols varying more or less extensively from the current Protestant belief. These symbols are on one side latitudinarian and rationalistic, and on the other Greek and Papal. It would be improper to describe the Arminian Remonstrance of 1610

by the former term, for while the Arminian theology as incorporated in that document was in open antagonism at four or five important points with the extreme Calvinism current on the continent at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was at the same time a direct outgrowth from the common Protestant stock,—embodying in itself nearly every principle, whether formal or spiritual, on which the Reformation in general had been based. It is true that in some minds the primitive Arminianism assumed a different phase, and became even rationalistic in its conception and presentation of the biblical truth; yet at the outset and in the main it was substantially evangelical, and while rejecting Calvinism, was yet in no just sense to be described as Pelagian. In its later developments, especially as accepted by many English minds during the century following, the theology which the Remonstrance originally represented certainly deserves an acknowledged place among the positive types of acceptable Christian doctrine.

Among the clearly latitudinarian or heretical symbols of the period may be placed the Anabaptist Confession, 1580; the Socinian Confession, 1542, expanded in the Racovian Catechism, 1605; and also, in a modified degree, the Confession and Catechism of Barclay, 1675, representing more fully than any antecedent document the belief of the Society of Friends. The first and last of these resemble each other in their leading tenets and tendencies. The Socinian symbols define what was by far the most dangerous departure from orthodox teaching, consequent upon the Reformation. Of other minor confessions belonging to the same class, it is hardly needful to speak, as none of these have become the basis of organized churches under whatever name. The aversion of heresy or of latitudinarianism to embody itself in a written creed receives a striking illustration here. Whether springing from a conscious unwillingness to put its opposition on record in definite form, or from an interior incapacity to formulate its own vague or defective conceptions, this aversion is a fact as universal as it is suggestive. Heresy like sin is often an anomaly to itself.

The Greek church accepts as the fundamental statement of its doctrine the decision of the seven ecumenical Councils. Among its later symbols of minor prominence are the Confession of Gennadius, 1453; of Critopulus, 1625; of Cyril Lucar, 1631; of Mogilas, 1643; and of the Synod of Jerusalem, 1672. The Catechism of Philaret, adopted in 1839 by the Holy Synod of the Russian Church, and approved by the eastern Patriarchs, has

been pronounced the ablest and clearest summary of modern Greek orthodoxy. Winer does not quote it, but relies in his exposition of oriental doctrine on the Confession of Mogilas and the Decrees of the Jerusalem Council. The chief value of these formularies to us lies in their illustration both of the immobility of the Greek communions, and of their wide departure from some of the cardinal doctrines of Scripture as enunciated by evangelical Protestantism.

The Papal symbols of the period are mainly the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent, 1545–1563, and the Catechism authorized by this Council and published in 1566 ; and as explanatory of these, the Tridentine Profession, 1564. To the formulation of these important symbols the Roman church, while clinging still to the three ancient creeds, and declaring the immutability of its belief as the sole church of God on earth, was driven by the doctrinal as well as practical exigencies of the Reformation. The whole may be regarded as an attempt to state the papal faith in better form at those points where Protestantism had shown that faith to be weak or erroneous. Romanism maintained the full sufficiency of the old creeds, yet held to the possibility of additions or accretions springing from the developing spiritual consciousness of the organized church. As the confessions of the Protestant churches were successively framed and scattered everywhere through northern Europe, setting forth tersely the great truths of Protestantism, it became necessary to meet these new and revolutionary beliefs by fresh, authoritative declarations of what was believed at Rome. In this necessity originated the Tridentine Council with its doctrine respecting the Scriptures, and its definition of sin, of the atonement, of justification and sanctification, of the sacraments and ordinances, and of the true church. No creed of the period was more carefully drawn, more skillful in structure or form, more authoritatively endorsed and promulgated. After three centuries it still stands as the final symbol of Roman Catholicism, to which nothing can be added except by the infallible wisdom of the pontificate, and from which nothing can ever be taken away. The Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council of 1870 and the Syllabus Errorum of 1864 superadd little to the canons and decrees of Trent beyond the affirmation of papal infallibilty, *ex cathedra*. The special Decree respecting the immaculacy of the Virgin Mary, 1854, hardly rises to the dignity of an authoritative doctrine, though widely influential as a church dogma.

16. Second Creedless Period since the Reformation.

Passing beyond the middle of the seventeenth century, we come upon another creedless period which may, with some small exceptions, be said to extend to the present time. It was in the nature of things that such a process as that just described, extending through considerably more than a century, and resulting in the production of more than thirty creeds of distinct importance, as well as many minor declarations of faith, should finally come to a close. Every recognizable section of Protestantism had stated its belief in some confessional form. The Roman church had revised its belief, and given it new and permanent expression. Even the more erratic tendencies born of the Reformation, and the heresies that had arisen in connection with the more legitimate protests of Christian faith against Rome, had taken formulative shape. Such a process needed no repetition so long as these various beliefs retained their primitive character. There might be expositions, commentaries, theologies, but there could well be no additional confessions. It is also a familiar fact that the seventeenth century, and in some divisions of Protestantism the eighteenth also, were devoted largely to the task of throwing the teaching of the symbols into the forms of systematic theology. It has been said with justice that the Protestant confessions gave birth to as noble a series of dogmatic writers as Christian literature has ever known—men as subtle as the schoolmen whose methods they inherited, but baptized richly with the spirit of the new evangelical doctrine. The process of evolution was in several respects analogous to that of the Scholastic era. Many of these theologies were framed, like the Institutes of Calvin, on the basis and order of the ancient creeds: others were expositions, more or less close and complete, of the symbols of the period just past: others were constructed around some central principle or doctrine by methods more exactly philosophic or speculative. Few minds if any wandered far from the territory occupied by these symbols: few were inclined to construct a theological system on any other plans than those here suggested.

Such periods are also likely to be followed by eras of practical activity rather than of speculative or dogmatic progress. The mind of the church having been put to rest for the time in regard to what it believes and must teach, the great task of teaching, of proclamation, becomes prominent: the work of making all men acquainted with the truth assumes supreme importance. Questions of organization, of government, of activity and growth

become conspicuous in the thought and regulate largely the actual life of the church. In the century following the close of the Reformation, great outward revolutions, wonderful discoveries and inventions, developments in science, art, philosophy and in social and civil life, contributed to draw away interest from the further formulation of belief, and to some extent even from the explanation and defence of the existing creeds. It may also be true that, as the heats and excitements of the great conflict of the sixteenth century passed off, something of reaction came over the hearts of men,—a reaction growing in some quarters even into a torpor, a degeneracy, not unlike in type that which we discover during the dark ages.

It should be said, however, that this period has not been wholly creedless. As new sects have been formed around specific issues,—as new varieties of polity, method, worship have arisen, explanatory declarations or statements have been made from time to time, often on the basis of some accepted symbol, which in turn represent later variations of thought and experience. The Savoy Declaration, 1658, the Baptist Confession of 1688, the Methodist Articles of Religion, 1784, may be taken as examples of this fact. The first of these differs from preceding Calvinistic symbols chiefly in its definition of the church; the second, in its emphasizing of the dogma of immersion; the third, in its exposition of the differences between the Methodism of Wesley and the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican church. Later illustrations of less prominence, such as the Auburn Declaration, the Articles of Reformed Episcopacy, the Declarations of American Congregationalism, or the Old Catholic Creeds, might be noted as indicative of the multiplied divisions which have arisen among Protestants around various issues in teaching, polity or worship. These represent, however, no continuous process of creed-making, but rather make manifest the fact that this process had practically come to an end. They also show that no further creed period can well arise until new and higher conceptions of the Gospel have been attained, or until the heart of the church has passed through some new and more profound experience of grace.

17. Comparative Symbolism as a Science illustrated.

This brief survey of the symbols of Christianity with reference to their number, their chronologic succession, and their doctrinal relations, may well lead us to a larger conception of the nature and worth of comparative symbolism, viewed as a branch of theological science. The proper interpretation of any single specimen among the major

confessions of the Reformation requires not merely careful knowledge of the theological terminology of the age, but also minute acquaintance with the theologies of the period, with the posture of ecclesiastical parties, with political events and tendencies, and with the types of spiritual experience prevailing at the time. Recent history exhibits at many points the evils of failure to recognize this primary requisition. Instead of taking the words and phrases of a confession in their plain historical sense, other meanings have been forced into them, new stress or emphasis has been laid here or there, and the obligation to receive the symbol as thus interpreted has been urged in a spirit and to an extent entirely at variance with the purpose or temper of those who framed it. The results of such perversion or abuse of creeds are seen in some of those conflicts and disruptions which have done so much to distract and dishonor the Protestantism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There is surely no wise or safe rule but to interpret each individual creed in the light of its own history, and to accept the meaning of the document precisely as it stands.

But if such exposition of the single creed be so delicate and difficult, how much greater the task of analyzing in like manner any group of creeds, or all the creeds of Protestantism or of Christendom, and presenting them to view comparatively, with proper reference to their respective contents, their mutual connections and relations, and their general worth. It is one of the felicities of our age that the preparations for this task have essentially been made. Collections of these symbols, practically adequate, have been gathered and made available for the student. Some careful and comprehensive work in this department has already been done. Yet the field is comparatively new, and much remains to be accomplished, if not in exploration, still in philosophic scrutiny and analysis, in close comparison, in exhaustive description and summation. To that work the Christian scholarship of our time seems by many considerations which need not here be named, to be especially invited.

The temper—it may be added—in which such a task should be undertaken must be pure, generous, catholic, devout. The creeds must be studied for higher purposes than the discovery of words and phrases with which to fortify personal opinion, or to flagellate some errorist or confute some doubting inquirer. The polemic elements displayed in them must be subordinated to what is irenic: the particular must be merged so far as possible in the universal. Toleration of all differences that are not absolutely

fundamental, careful recognition of all essential oneness amid incidental divergencies, must be cherished and sought. The spirit of partisan narrowness or bigotry, or even of supreme loyalty to sect, must give way to the loftier spirit of devotion to the essential truth, and of love for all of whatever name who receive the truth though in differing form. High regard for the Word of God as supreme, a corresponding view of all creeds as human and therefore imperfect, true interest in the thoughts and the struggles of good men for the truth in other lands and times, a keen sense of the living laws of growth under which all Christian thought and experience are developed, and an earnest and pure desire to use all that may be learned from the past as helps toward still further advance in the future,—these are among the incentives which must regulate such study, and inspire the student at every stage. On any other basis, comparative symbolism or even particular symbolism can only prove embarrassing and injurious alike to faith and to character.

THE WESTMINSTER SYMBOLS: From this cursory consideration of the nature, origin and offices of the Christian creeds, and of the field and scope of particular and comparative symbolism, we may now proceed with advantage to take an introductory survey of the Symbols of Westminster, with reference especially to their sources, the history of their formation, the extent of their acceptance, and their relative place among the great historic creeds. This view must of necessity be brief and cursory; a more minute and discriminating estimate will be practicable at the close of the proposed studies.

18. The British Reformation; antecedent symbols.

It is a familiar fact that the British Reformation, so far as it was doctrinal, assumed in general the Calvinistic rather than the Lutheran type. Many of its leaders especially in Scotland had received their theological impress and tendency rather from Geneva and France and the schools of Holland than from Germany. Melville had been the disciple of Beza, and John Knox who stamped his own convictions so ineffaceably on the Scotch mind, had sat at the feet of Calvin, and—as his treatise on Predestination shows—had embraced his teaching even in its most positive and uncompromising features. And as Lutheranism and Calvinism became by degrees more distinct as antithetic types of the common Protestantism, the British and especially the Scotch mind grew into stronger sympathy with the latter, and its belief and teaching were cast more and more in the Calvinistic mold. The

English church indeed felt this doctrinal impress more lightly : its impulses and movements were rather ecclesiastical than theological; questions of polity and ritual were more prominent than questions of doctrine or belief. The Augsburg Confession, which Schaff has extolled as the most churchly, the most catholic and the most conservative creed of Protestantism, had also at an early day obtained some special standing in England; many Episcopalians were much in sympathy with it, especially in its mediate theological position and its liturgical trend. It is an illustrative fact that Melancthon, substantially the author of that Confession, was twice invited to England as Professor of Divinity. Yet the English mind, though never disposed to push its faith out into every logical extreme or to hold that faith in a positively dogmatic temper, still by degrees accepted in general the Reformed rather than the Lutheran system, and affiliated rather with Switzerland and Holland than with Germany. Of this general fact we have sufficient illustration in the three British creeds which preceded the Symbols of Westminster,—the Scotch Confession of 1560, the Thirty-Nine Articles, 1563, and the Irish Articles, 1615.

The Scotch Confession, prepared by six theologians with Knox as chief, appointed by the Parliament of Scotland, was intended to be a definite declaration of the faith of all within that realm who adhered to the cause of the Reformation. In general it went beyond several of the Reformed confessions in its statement of predestination and election, the utter fall and ruin of man, and the limited scope of grace, while in its exposition of salvation by faith and the related truths it fairly maintained the strong position of the earlier Protestant creeds. It was, however, popular rather than dogmatic in form, somewhat inexact in language and statement, and thus unfitted to become a permanent formulary of belief. It is remarkable that it contained no distinct Article on the cardinal doctrine of justification. Such as it was, it became the standard and basis of the Scotch church, and did much to impart to Scottish thought that marked Calvinistic cast which it retained through all the eventful struggles of the succeeding century.

The Thirty-Nine Articles, prepared by Cranmer and Ridley in 1551, and revised under Elizabeth, and made in 1563 the basis of the established church in England, were also essentially, though less positively, Calvinistic in their type. Framed as they were to be a national formulary, and designed as such to satisfy persons and parties of diverse opinion and tendency,—framed also in the presence of a papal influence not yet overcome, and under the eye of a dominating prelacy, it was natural that these Articles should

content themselves with generic rather than specific statements, and with affirmations of plain scriptural facts more than with recondite reasonings and deductions respecting such mysteries as the divine decrees and the election of grace. Yet in essence this important symbol was Calvinistic; and under its training the English mind was led, like the Scotch, to the acceptance at least in outline of the general system of belief bearing that significant name.

The Irish Articles, though less conspicuous in their authoritativeness than either of the preceding symbols, have special importance to us on account of their closer connection, as to both time and form, with the Symbols of Westminster. Drawn up by the celebrated Ussher, afterwards Archbishop of Armagh and primate of Ireland, based substantially on the Thirty-nine Articles of the English church, and recognizing the prelatic mode of government and the ecclesiastical primacy of the crown, they still were in close harmony with the more positive Calvinism of Scotland, and through that affiliation did much to prepare the British mind generally for the more notable Confession that followed. It is a well known fact that in their form, in the order and arrangement and even in the language used, these Articles were made the basis of that later formulary, as their doctrine did much to shape the belief and declarations of the Westminster Assembly itself.

These creeds representing essentially the doctrinal belief of the British Isles, and sufficiently clear and full in their teaching, might have met all the necessities of which Protestantism in Britain was conscious, had not other causes, ecclesiastical and political, created a new and urgent need for some further formulation of the popular faith. Of these the developing issues between civil assumption on the one side and religious independence on the other, the related conflict between diverse theories of church order and worship, and especially the dominance of an arrogant ecclesiasticism, under such leaders as Laud, may be named as chief in importance. During the reigns of Elizabeth and James, extending from 1558 down to 1625, Prelacy had not only entrenched itself thoroughly in England as the state religion, but had sought to make itself such in Ireland and Scotland. The Scotch people, still animated by the spirit of Knox, and imbued with his teachings, could only resist such intrusion of a foreign church and service; and the effort resulted rather in the firmer establishment of the Presbyterian faith and polity and worship. Even in England this enforcement of Epis-

19. A new symbol needed: political and ecclesiastical occasions.

copacy induced the development of extensive dissent, especially of the Puritan type; and there were many, belonging particularly to the body of positive Calvinists, who strongly preferred the Presbyterian to the Prelatic form and order. During the unhappy reign of Charles I. from 1625 to the convening of the Long Parliament in 1640, this conflict between Episcopacy and Puritanism in general, and especially between Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, became more and more intense. The agreement in doctrine of which both parties were more or less conscious, was not sufficient to overcome the conscious difference of opinion, and of feeling also, as to worship and government. Many Presbyterians in England could without scruple have accepted the Thirty-Nine Articles as expressing at least the more essential points in their religious belief, and it is certain that some Prelatists could in like manner have fallen in with even the Scotch Confession, had not these ecclesiastical issues, greatly complicated as they were by the mischievous notion of a state church, stood in the way. But these issues were too radical, and too many personal elements and party tendencies were obstructing the path of union; and in the end, open and complete rupture became the only possible result.

During the stormy period from 1640 to 1643, that result was realized in the practical prostration of both the king and the national church of England at the feet of the Long Parliament, which for the time represented the strong hostility to both, current in the popular mind. Early in 1643, the Parliament conscious of its growing power, and realizing the political necessity for such an act, resolved in open defiance of the king upon a reconstruction of the established church, with a view to the substitution of some form of ecclesiastical organization more in harmony with the prevalent sentiment of the nation. It had indeed practically overthrown Episcopacy during the preceding autumn; its present aim and purpose were to provide a satisfactory substitute. Such had been the degree of intimacy and of mutual understanding between the popular party dominant in Parliament and the General Assembly and Lords of Estates in Scotland, that there was little room for doubt as to what in substance this substitute should be. It was seen that nothing but positive Calvinism in doctrine and Presbyterianism in polity, with recognized freedom from liturgical bondage in worship, could meet the demand of the time. Yet in form the Parliament was seeking simply, as it affirmed, to settle the government and liturgy of the church of England, and incidentally to vindicate and clear the doctrine of the said church from false aspersions and misrepre-

sentations. And in order to secure these ends, and by the same process to establish its own supremacy in both church and state, the Parliament in June, 1643, passed the notable Act, convening the Westminster Assembly.*

This Assembly of learned and godly divines, to use the descriptive language of the Act, was convened on the first day of July, 1643. A brief glance at its composition, its main elements and tendencies, its circumstances and labors, is now requisite. Its membership was selected by the same political power which had called it into existence. It was not, as Clarendon said, a convocation according to the diocesan way of government, nor was it called by the votes of the ministers, according to the Presbyterian way, The Parliament selected all the members, and selected them merely with a view to have their opinion and advice for settling the government, liturgy and doctrine of the church of England. Deliberation was to be strictly confined to such topics as the Parliament proposed; and the ordinance creating the body expressly forbad its assuming or exercising any jurisdiction, power or authority ecclesiastical whatsoever, or any other power that was not particularly expressed in the ordinance. The presiding officers and the rules governing the proceedings were also prescribed by the civil authorities. Parliament also provided for the compensation of the members at a rate of four shillings daily, with additional remuneration for losses occasioned by absence from their homes and parishes. Of the aggregate of one hundred and fifty-one persons selected, thirty were lords or commoners, appointed as lay assessors to represent the civil government. One hundred and twenty were divines of more or less prominence. As it was the aim of Parliament to bring together, though not in equal proportion, the representatives of all reputable varieties of opinion in respect to religious doctrine or church order, about twenty-five of the clerical deputies were Prelatists: but these with two

20. The Westminster Assembly: its constitution, membership, aim.

*In addition to the secular Histories of the period, (Clarendon, Hallam, Froude, Green, Gardiner, and others) and to the general Church Histories, (Fuller, Burnet, Stoughton and others), see Minutes of the Westminster Assembly, edited with Introduction by Mitchell; Hetherington, History of the Westminster Assembly; Mitchell, the Westminster Assembly; Baillie, Letters and Journal; Lightfoot, Journal; Gillespie, Notes; Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I. Also McCrie, Annals of English Presbytery; Neal, History of the Puritans; Marsden, Puritans; Masson, Life of Milton. Also Reid, Memoirs of the Divines of Westminster; and other biographic sketches.

on three exceptions declined to sit in the Assembly. The Independent party then rising into prominence had but six or eight representatives; and an equal number were Erastians whose chief purpose was to maintain in every issue the absolute supremacy of the state over the church. The great body were Presbyterians, representing in general that strong and earnest sentiment in England which, from the organization of the first Presbytery at Wandsworth, in 1572, had steadily grown into prominence notwithstanding the hostility of both the crown and the established church. Considerable variety of opinion as to both doctrine and polity existed among those who represented that general sentiment; some maintaining vigorously the strict Calvinism of Geneva and Dort and the divine right of Presbyterianism, others holding to a more moderate Calvinism, and representing rather what was termed the *jus humanum* as the true basis of ecclesiastical authority. Five divines and three laymen at first, and subsequently one additional minister and three elders from Scotland, were also admitted to the Assembly. Of these Scotch commissioners the leading mind was Alexander Henderson, who was one of the most conspicuous divines at home, and to whom as early as 1539, four years before the Westminster Assembly met, the Scotch church had intrusted the task of framing a creed which should fill out the deficiencies of the old Scotch Confession, and give to the church a formulary adequately expressive of its more matured faith. Three divines of special prominence from New England, Cotton and Hooker and Davenport, were selected for membership, but none of these were able to be present. According to Mitchell sixteen additional lay members and eighteen divines, chiefly to fill vacancies occasioned by death or absence, were afterwards at different times appointed by Parliament. But of the whole number eleven laymen and twenty-nine divines are not on record as having attended any of the sessions, so that the actual membership from first to last, including the Scotch delegation and the two scribes, was—so far as can be ascertained—not far from one hundred and fifty. Sixty-nine appeared at the first convocation, and the general attendance probably ranged from fifty to eighty. The names, the general standing, the personal characteristics and special qualifications of the members have been frequently and minutely described. Manton, who was probably one of them, in his striking Preface to the Confession, describes the body as a synod of as godly, judicious divines as England ever saw. After alluding to the bitter opprobium and opposition which the Assembly encountered, he adds: If in the day of old when

councils were in power and account, they had but had such a council of bishops as this of presbyters was, the fame of it for learning and holiness and all ministerial abilities, would with very great honor have been transmitted to posterity.

The sessions of the Assembly were continued for more than five years, at the rate of two hundred annually, till February, 1649, after Charles had been dethroned and beheaded. The whole number of recorded sessions was eleven hundred and sixty-three; but some of the members continued to meet as a committee for special purposes for three years longer, when the forcible dissolution of Parliament by Cromwell compelled the Assembly to disband, even without formal adjournment. While the sittings began in the main portion of the famous Abbey of Westminster, the Assembly soon adjourned for comfort to a private room in the Abbey, historically known as the Jerusalem Chamber. It is interesting to note everything which history has preserved respecting even the more incidental events and features of this remarkable convocation. Baillie has given us a graphic description of the historic room, the arrangement of the seats, the length of the sessions, the order of business, the method of discussion, the formation and reports of committees, together with other like details of very great interest. Gillespie in his extensive Notes, and in his report to the Scotch Assembly at the close of his service as commissioner, sheds much additional light on the spirit and methods as well as the work and productions of the body. Mitchell records the instructions and rules of procedure prescribed by Parliament and observed by the Assembly for its guidance in all deliberations. The MINUTES contain many illustrations of the decorous way in which the business was transacted, and also of the freedom with which discussion was carried on, and the remarkable patience with which even the most extreme and objectionable opinions were heard. They also contain many interesting details, such as the regulations concerning absences and infrequent or late coming or going away without leave, concerning the private reading of books and private communication among members, the moving from place to place in the chamber during the sessions, and the propriety of being uncovered, the hat off, whenever one was out of his appointed place. They also record the daily prayers, the frequent days of fasting and devotion, the discourses delivered on various occasions, the funeral services in the case of Twisse, the Prolocutor, and others who died during the prolonged sessions, the parliamentary appropriations, and benevolent contributions received and distributed: and also the

action of the Assembly in licensing candidates, the settlement of ministers over parishes, the appointment of chaplains, and various other ecclesiastical affairs of like character. From these and other sources we may gain a very distinct conception both of the Assembly and its more prominent members, and may almost see the venerable body at work as it went on from week to week, from year to year, in the endeavor to accomplish the great end for which it had been convened.

The first, though not the most important, task of the Assembly was ecclesiastical and liturgical rather than doctrinal. The wording of the Ordinance of Parliament clearly indicates that this was the primary design of the convocation,—to determine upon a form of government and discipline and prescribe a mode of worship; in a word, to construct a state church with which all classes might be required to conform, and which should take the place of Prelacy as the national church, rather than to formulate afresh that system of belief in which nearly all classes were already sufficiently agreed. It is clear that doctrinal changes or doctrinal affirmations would hardly have been deemed desirable, had not some of these more urgent issues appeared to turn somewhat on the primal question of belief. To frame a polity, to determine the form of worship, to create a state church, was the original endeavor; and to this endeavor much the larger part of the time and thought of the Assembly, especially during the two earlier years, was given. The Directory of Public Worship was completed and presented to Parliament late in the summer of 1644, and the Directory (or Form) of Church Government in the summer of 1645. The latter formulary was modeled largely after the Directory prepared chiefly by Thomas Cartwright, for the use of the Presbyterian churches during the reign of Elizabeth.

The doctrinal work of the Assembly began with an examination of the Thirty-Nine Articles and the first ten weeks of its sessions were spent in considering the first fifteen of these Articles. It has been questioned whether this was intended to lead finally to an endorsement or to some emendation of that symbol, or whether it was not rather the purpose of at least some portion of the Assembly to occupy time in this way until opportunity should arise to give different direction to the proceedings. Neal expresses the judgment that the main purpose was to render the sense of the Articles more express and determinate in favor of Calvinism, and so to strengthen the church in Britain against the young and vigorous Arminianism of Holland then rising into prominence. It is certain that after the signing

of the Solemn League and Covenant in September—a step which committed all parties to an effort to secure ecclesiastical uniformity not only in England but throughout the three Kingdoms, and which was substantially an agreement that such uniformity should be secured in and through the Presbyterian system—the consideration of the Thirty-Nine Articles was abruptly terminated and never afterward renewed.* From that time onward until the autumn of 1645, the mind of the Assembly was engrossed almost exclusively with what may be termed church questions—questions bearing upon the real nature of the church, the right mode of

*In the Appendix to Neal: History of the Puritans, may be found in parallel columns the original Articles and the Revised Articles, together with the passages of Scripture adduced as proofs. Some of the changes made in the titles and also in the body of certain Articles were verbal merely, and were made apparently in the interest of order or clearness, fullness or condensation. In several instances additions were made, either by way of explanation or for the sake of theological completeness. In Art. II. the words, most grievous torments in his soul from God, were added to the phrase, truly suffered. In Art. III. the phrase, he descended into hell, was explained by the words, he continued in the state of the dead, and under the power and dominion of death. Art. IV. concerning the resurrection of Christ was expanded by the affirmation of the general resurrection of the body — thus harmonizing it with the three ancient creeds. Art. V. was in like manner expanded by the statement that the Holy Ghost is very and eternal God. Art. VI. contained the important addition: All which books, (the books of the Old and New Testaments just named,) we do receive and acknowledge to be given by the inspiration of God, and in that regard to be of most certain credit and highest authority. In Art. VII. after the statement that the moral law is obligatory upon all men, it was significantly added: By the moral law we understand all the Ten Commandments taken in their full extent.

Considerable debate occurred in the Assembly respecting Art. VIII. relating to the three ancient Creeds, but no change was finally adopted. In Art. IX. on Original Sin, a number of changes were made; one introducing the dogma of the legal and immediate imputation of the sin of Adam to his posterity; another affirming that original sin deserves the divine wrath and damnation; another, declaring that concupisence is also sinful and deserving of condemnation; and still another, teaching that this sinful infection remains in the regenerate. In Art. X. on Free Will, besides one or two verbal changes, a clause was added in the interest of the sovereignty and power of divine grace: Working so effectually in us as that it determineth our will to do that which is good

The chief debate, so far as appears in the MINUTES, related to Art. XI. on Justification. The definition of Justification — accounted righteous — was expanded by the addition of the phrase, the remission of sins; the ground of justification was stated negatively, not for or by our own works or deservings, as well as positively; the imputation of the whole obedience and satisfaction of Christ was given as the true and only ground; and it was added that God doth not forgive the impenitent, who refuse to exercise faith

public worship, the scriptural method of church organization, the authority for discipline, and other kindred matters.

Two of these church questions, in view of their close relation to the doctrinal teaching of the Symbols, may be briefly mentioned here. The first of these related to the real nature of the church. After the withdrawal of the Episcopal representatives, there were but two classes of opinion upon this point—the Presbyterian and the Independent. The advocates of the latter opinion, though few in number, were men of marked ability and of extensive influence, especially with the Parliament. To conciliate this element, and to secure substantial agreement on this subject, as far as possible, became an important aim of the Presbyterian majority; and to this end a vast amount of time was spent in scholastic discussion of such topics as the different offices in the church both temporary and permanent, the relations of particular churches to each other, the right of ordination, the power and limits of discipline. Though such discussion was in the main amicable, and though concessions were made on both sides, the *jure divino* theory held by most of the Presbyterians, and indeed by the Independents largely, and also the general tendency toward extreme positions on all religious issues, prevented any actual agreement; and the conflict of opinion ended at last in the adoption of the Presbyterian view, as defined in the Form of Church Government, and the Directory for Public Worship.

The other question related to the connection between the church and the state, and to the right of the church to exercise ecclesiastical authority apart from the state. It being granted that

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in this gracious mediation. The main discussion on this Art. related to the theological question whether the whole obedience of Christ or only his passive obedience is the specific ground of justification.

In Art. XII. on Good Works, it is said by way of explanation, that such works done by believers, notwithstanding their imperfection are in the sight of God pleasing and acceptable in and for Christ. And in Art. XIII. where in the original it is said that the works done before justification have the nature of sin, it is declared more positively that all such works are sinful. The changes in Articles XIV. and XV. have no theological importance. The Assembly was proceeding in the consideration of Art. XVI. on Sin after Baptism, when in October it was instructed by Parliament to enter at once upon the formulation of a scheme of government and discipline, and also a directory for worship, to take the place of the Episcopal formularies; and from this time on, the plan of reconstructing the Thirty-Nine Articles was abandoned,—the proposal to frame a new creed taking its place. There are, however, several indications in the Symbols that the Assembly, while setting aside this earlier creed, still sought to preserve its phraseology and to adhere to the substance of its teaching, wherever this was found to be practicable.

Presbyterianism was the true and divine form of government for the Christian church,—it being also agreed that the Presbyterian church as such should be set up in the three Kingdoms as the one church of Christ in the British Isles, there remained in the mind of Parliament and of the Erastian party in the Assembly the further question as to what degree of authority such an organization should have, and how far such an *imperium in imperio* could be safely admitted within the English realm. The discussion of these questions was quite as extensive and as absorbing as that around the preceding issue; and the result, as in the former instance, was a triumph of the Presbyterian view, though not without bringing the Assembly, again and again, as we shall have occasion to note, into serious conflict with Parliament itself.

Three years, and more, passed away before the final result was reached. It was not until the summer of 1647, that Presbyterianism secured the position it had all the while coveted, and became —so far as it ever did become—the established church of the British Isles. The illusive conception of uniformity, to be attained by means of a state church, and by the repression of all forms of dissent, constantly attracted and misled the Assembly; and when that result was gained through the formal act of Parliament, the Presbyterian party in both church and state regarded the victory of Presbyterianism over all other types of Christianity as forever assured in Britain. But the day of triumph was the beginning of disaster; so far as England was concerned, the scheme was a pitiful failure. No theoretical polity could stand in the presence of shifting popular sentiment, and of severe political exigency; and in a brief period, numbered by months rather than by years, it became evident that the practical issue, in England at least, would be either the submission of everything religious and political to the sway of a loose Independency, under such leaders as Cromwell, or the restoration of the monarchy and the rehabilitation of Prelacy as the established church. It is a startling illustration of the changeful and revolutionary temper of the times that, in less than eighteen years from the memorable day when the Assembly and the Parliament lifted up their hands to heaven and together swore allegiance to the principles of the Solemn League and Covenant, that noble document was by royal command publicly burned in the streets of London by the common hangman.

These historical glances at the Westminster Assembly on its ecclesiastical side, and in its aspirations and struggles toward civil supremacy, are indispensable to any adequate view of its theological position and teachings. But we may now turn to

consider more immediately its doctrinal labors, and note the doctrinal results attained. It has well been said (Gardiner: Puritan Revolution) that in all the varieties of Puritanism the heart was addressed through the intellect rather than through the eye—by means of doctrine rather than of ceremony, such as Laud and his associates had sought to enforce. This was eminently characteristic of the type of Puritanism represented in the Assembly. While the members of that body were anxious to secure uniformity in worship and also in government, it was their chief desire after all to secure clearness and earnestness and harmony of belief around what they conceived to be the essential doctrines of the Christian religion. After the examination of the Thirty-nine Articles had ended, the Assembly felt itself more and more constrained to prepare a new symbol, which should express at greater length and in better form its more pronounced Calvinism. Yet under the pressure of the issues already described, this necessity was postponed for two years or more. Although a committee had been appointed in August, 1644, to prepare and digest material for such a symbol, it was not until the summer of 1645, that the work of framing the Confession was actually undertaken,—a committee composed of nine among the ablest and most valued members being appointed at that time, to whom the delicate and difficult task in its varied details was intrusted. This committee was subsequently enlarged by the addition of ten members, and of the clerical commissioners from Scotland as advisory;* and to it as a whole, and as divided into sections, were committed the general arrangement of topics, the order and titles of the several chapters, the tentative defining of particular doctrines, the special matter of language and expression, and in fact the entire work of formulating the Confession,—subject at all times to the supervisory authority of the Assembly itself. The MINUTES show that this supervisory function was faithfully exercised, and that as each chapter was finished, it was presented to the Assembly for minute and final examination. In such examination, though the whole matter was carefully considered, only a few subjects seem to have elicited prolonged debate,—particularly the relation of the headship of Christ to the civil magistracy, and the doctrines of decrees,

21. Doctrinal labors and results: Confession and Catechisms.

*For more extended accounts of the membership of this committee and its mode of procedure, see MITCHELL, Westminster Assembly: HETHERINGTON, Hist. *in loc:* SCHAFF, Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I: Neal, Fuller, Reid, Stoughton, Masson, and others.

predestination, election and reprobation. Concerning the latter topics, substantial agreement was at last secured, at least in the form of expression, though not without long and tough discussion. More than a year was occupied in these theological deliberations, mingled with much debate concerning ecclesiastical issues, and requisite attention to various matters of detail; and it was not until October, 1646, that the Assembly submitted to the scrutiny of Parliament the first half of the Confession. In the following December, the entire document was presented to that body under the significant title: The Humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines now, by authority of Parliament, sitting at Westminster, concerning a Confession of Faith. Parliament called for scriptural proofs on every point; and the Assembly reconsidered the whole, annexed such proofs to the several propositions in each chapter, and reported the document the second time during the month of April, 1647. Various political and other exigencies prevented Parliament from giving time to the consideration of the Confession; and it was not until March, 1648, that after full conference between the two Houses, the document was formally approved; the adopting act giving among others the significant reason,—that this Kingdom and all the Reformed churches in Christendom may see that the Parliament of England differ not in doctrine. Exception was taken, however, to certain particulars in discipline, relating specially to the matter of civil authority over religious affairs, and to the independent rights of the church as asserted by the Assembly; and these particulars were recommitted. Parliament being shortly after dissolved by Cromwell, the Assembly never reported on these excepted clauses, and the Confession stands as originally presented. The title was changed by the civil authorities to, Articles of the Christian Religion, agreed upon by both Houses of Parliament, after Advice had with the Assembly of Divines,—a signal illustration of the mischiefs in which the prevalent theory of church and state was continually involving those who maintained it, whether statesmen or divines. This title has of course disappeared, though the theory indicated by it in some of its phases still survives.

While the Confession was thus taking form, committees were also appointed by the Assembly to prepare at first a single Catechism, but afterwards two Catechisms, for the instruction of children and of adult persons ignorant of divine truth. The theory of church growth then everywhere current, and the practice of the Protestant churches on the continent, naturally led to this step. The policy of catechetical indoctrination, first

developed by Luther, had become so well established and was so extensively carried out on the continent, as to give practical point to the remark attributed to the Council of Trent, that the heretics have chiefly made use of catechisms to corrupt the minds of Christians. Such use was common in Great Britain almost from the first; the number and quality of the antecedent English and Scotch catechisms are quite remarkable: their name, says Mitchell, is legion. While following such precedents the Assembly determined, however, to complete the Confession first, in order that the Catechisms might be modeled after it in method and phraseology; and they were therefore not presented to Parliament until November, 1647, nor with full scriptural proofs, until April, 1648. Nor was it till the September following, seven months after the adoption of the Confession, that Parliament accepted the two Catechisms and ordered them to be printed. One of the leading minds of the Assembly, Dr. Wallis, prepared a brief and easy explanation of the Shorter Catechism, which was approved by the Assembly and also submitted to the consideration of Parliament.

Such were the doctrinal results and products of the Westminster Assembly. It will be seen on closer inspection that these Symbols taken together constitute a full, definite and valuable statement of the predominating theological opinion in the British Isles at the date of their adoption. Prepared with more of deliberation than any preceding creed of Protestantism, and without much disruptive controversy, they may be regarded as expressing more deliberately the final judgment of Protestant scholarship of the Reformed type, in regard to the vital topics presented. Each Symbol should be studied in connection with the rest, as each is exegetical of all; and all should in like manner be studied in the light of the strong and peculiar theology of the period. Thus contemplated, these formularies are certainly worthy of the most thoughtful consideration of all who would know what the ablest and purest Calvinism in Europe was, a little more than two centuries ago. The editorial Introduction to the treatise of Winer is hardly extravagant in the statement that no Confession so fully expresses the doctrine of the Reformed branch of the Reformation, and none has exerted so much influence in Christendom. It remains to this day the avowed or unavowed directory of the religious faith of all who, throughout the English-speaking world, hold to the traditions of Puritan theology.

It may serve to increase our sense of the value of the work, ecclesiastical and especially doctrinal, accomplished by the Assem-

bly, if we glance briefly at the grave difficulties amid which this work was wrought, and the temper with which the Assembly undertook and carried through its weighty task. The foremost of these difficulties may be seen in the strained and indeed painful relations which by degrees came to subsist between that body and the English Parliament, and which at some later stages seemed almost to reach the point of open rupture. There is no reason to doubt that Parliament at first regarded the body which it had created, and had entrusted with so serious a commission—to which it had given such implicit instructions, and for whose support it had made provision from the national treasury—with positive friendship, and even with a high measure of confidence. Many indications of this occur in the Minutes and in the Parliamentary Records during the earlier years in the life of the Assembly. Masson tersely describes the Assembly as at the outset a power or institution in the English realm, existing side by side with the Parliament, and in constant conference and co-operation with it. Yet as events progressed, and new causes of difference and friction arose, the feeling of Parliament by degrees obviously changed; the boundary lines of the respective prerogatives became matters of dispute; the action of the Assembly, especially regarding the church and its relation to the civil state, was seriously challenged; and the prevalent temper of Parliament, or at least of many members, grew to be one of suspicion if not of hostility. The political struggles, becoming more and more intense, and the new issues arising from time to time within the civil sphere, helped on the growing alienation. One of the most painful illustrations of this developing estrangement appears in the practical arraignment of the Assembly by Parliament in 1646, on the charge of an abuse of privilege in its petition to that body respecting the supreme right of the church to determine who should be admitted to the sacrament—an arraignment in which the Christian dignity and patience of the Assembly, and its fidelity to sound principle, stand out in marked contrast with the domineering spirit and imperative language of Parliament and its representatives. Others are manifested in the way in which the House of Commons received and treated the first draft of the Confession, in its imperative call for proof texts, in its unsympathetic criticism, and the needless postponement of the final adoption, notwithstanding the earnest pleadings of the Assembly.

22. Difficulties confronted; Temper of the Assembly; value of its work.

It would be impracticable here even to sketch in outline the

political situation in general, with its many complications and embarrassments, as that situation seriously disturbed the Assembly in the endeavor to fulfill its appointed mission. The student of English history will be at no loss to discern such disturbing influences, or to see how inevitably the popularity and influence of the Assembly declined in the presence of such civil commotions. The years were also marked by the spontaneous rise of multitudinous sects and schools of thought, widely at variance with each other, but all agreeing in questioning or reviling the strong doctrines and the high spiritual standard of the Assembly, as well as its ecclesiastical regimen and its staid order of worship. As the Savoy Council testified a few years later, the devil in this small time ran through the whole round and circle of delusions, while men took the freedom to vent and vend their own vain and accursed imaginations, contrary to the great and fixed truths of the Gospel. And there must have been seasons when, in the presence of such strange developments and tendencies, the Assembly was almost ready to drop its high task in despair, and to give England over to the revolutionary forces that seemed to be seeking to corrupt or destroy both state and church at once. It was not Cromwellian Independency alone that gave ground for such discouragement, neither was it an aggressive Prelacy, steadily seeking to return to power. Antichrists were abroad in the land: more dangerous forces still seemed to be at work, both in society and within the religious sphere: and the efforts of the Assembly to resist or repress these seemed as idle as the enactments of a commonwealth to stay some onward sweeping pestilence.

Within itself the Assembly had much to bear in the way of embarrassment and trial. It was a serious matter to call upon so many men of special prominence to leave their homes, their parishes and bishoprics, their university engagements and studies, in order to give themselves up for five long years to the work assigned them. It is not strange that there were prolonged absences, at home and elsewhere, and many failures to be present, even when important action was to be taken. The pecuniary losses involved in such a prolonged engagement were very great, and the wealthier members were more than once led to forego their share of the parliamentary stipend in order to help out their needier brethren. Sickness frequently invaded their ranks, and as many as twelve or fifteen members died during the sessions,—one of whom, Twisse, the venerable Prolocutor, was buried with special ceremonies in Westminster Abbey, only to be sacrilegiously exhumed after the Restoration, and cast with a number of others into one common

grave, somewhere within the Abbey grounds. The debates were often so prolonged as to justify the gentle remonstrance of Henderson, during the interminable discussion on the power vested inherently in the particular congregation: We thought we had been near the harbor, but now we are sailing out into the deep! Many more loves their own fancies here than I did expect, wrote Baillie during the progress of one of these long debates. He says elsewhere that the members harangue long and learnedly, but their longsomeness is awful,—that they are guilty of prolixity and infamous slowness,—that they spend time on scabrous (rough, troublesome) questions, and in velitations on quiddities,—and that the church business drives on wonderful heavillie. Nor were there wanting asperities in such debate, followed by dislikes and alienations and by contentious opposition to what was decided,—in one or two instances so great as to lead almost to the expulsion of contumacious members. The references to such differences, suggested in the Life of Lightfoot and the Letters of Baillie, are both significant and painful.

How quietly and patiently, amid all such tumult without and within, the Assembly went on year by year with its allotted task,—how steadily it adhered to its principles in defiance alike of the assumptions of Parliament and the oppositions of sectaries of various sorts,—how confidently it persisted in the unfolding of its fixed convictions respecting worship and government, and of its profound conceptions in theology,—especially with what moral earnestness as well as intellectual conviction, what profound and controlling piety, and what devotedness to God, it went on and on in the discharge of its recognized duty to him and his great cause,* can be known only to those who carefully study the

* We shall have occasion to note again and again the religious quality of the Assembly. One striking illustration recorded in the Minutes of Oct. 8, 1645, may be mentioned here. It had been resolved, on the previous Friday, that the body should meet to humble themselves before God; that the services should extend from 9 A. M. to 4 P. M.; and that two members should be appointed to preach, and three to offer prayer. Accordingly Dr. Burges began with prayer; Mr. Reynolds, after a short prayer, preached from Matt. xvi: 24; Mr. Whitakers prayed; Mr. Palmer, after a short prayer, preached from Zach iii: 6, 7; and Mr. Ash closed with prayer,—the services ending with a collection for the benefit (apparently) of certain members and their families. Baillie describes another similar occasion in 1644, when the services lasted eight hours: Mr. Marshall praying large two hours most divinely, and Vines and Seaman each praying near two hours, while Arrowsmith and Palmer each preached one hour;—the whole followed by a short, sweet conference and confession of sins. Men who could thus frequently spend entire days in such devotional services, certainly believed in the reality

records of its action, and take proper note of the commanding influence exerted through such action on the thought and experience of that important era in British history. That the Assembly made mistakes and sometimes fell into error, and was occasionally too sweeping and severe in its theological dicta and demands, may be readily admitted. Such incidents are attributable largely to the times, and partly—it may be—to the intrinsic nature of that type of doctrine which the Assembly sought in all fidelity to erect in its completeness. Yet these defects are not so numerous or so serious as to shut out from view the remarkable strength and proportion of that magnificent temple of sacred truth. An untheologic age, in which plain and square doctrine is ignored, and biblical truths are much confused with human speculation, and loose generalizations and airy fancies are too often substituted for the simple Gospel, may not be able to appreciate either the loftier spirit of the Assembly or the solid grandeur of its work. But the observant centuries will not fail to estimate rightly either the moral elevation of its temper and purpose, or the substantial quality and value of its teaching.

22. The Westminster Symbols in Britain: Their varied career and influence.

Some brief allusion should be made in this introductory survey to the remarkable career and history of the Symbols in the British Isles.—Scarcely had the Presbyterian church been established in England in the place of Prelacy, when the political scepter passed into the hands of Cromwell, and Charles fell a victim to his own folly and to the popular hostility. This event rendered impossible the maintenance of the Presbyterian polity, and a church more in harmony with the mind and taste of Cromwell and his party naturally took its place. The Provincial Synod of London indeed continued to meet until 1653 or later, without encouragement from the Protector, yet without direct opposition. From that time till his death in 1658, Presbyterianism in England grew weaker and weaker; Presbyterians were ejected from their livings upon refusal to support the Commonwealth; Independents were appointed to fill the vacancies; the power of ordination and of appointment was given to a committee of Triers, of whom a large proportion were Independents. In 1658, at the Savoy near London, the latter party were convened by civil mandate to prepare a new formula both of

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of religion and the efficacy of prayer. In the presence of such records, it seems hardly an exaggeration to say (Briggs: Amer. Presbyterianism) that such a band of preaching and praying ministers as was gathered in the Westminster Assembly, the world had never seen before.

faith and of order. This council adopted the Westminster Symbols substantially, but drafted a Platform of Church Polity of which the autonomy of the local church was the central feature. Meanwhile, the death of Cromwell and the brief reign of his son were followed in two short years by the elevation of Charles II. to the throne; and after that event both Independency and Presbyterianism retired together, and Prelacy with all its theological as well as ecclesiastical peculiarities became again the dominant faith.

In Scotland, the Form of Church Government and the Directory for Worship were adopted by the General Assembly as early as 1645, and in 1647, the same body formally approved the Confession. In the following year the Catechisms were ratified in like manner; and from that date the Westminster Symbols, taking the place of the old confession of Knox, became the doctrinal basis of the Scottish church. The language of the Adopting Act is full of significance. After describing the Confession as most agreeable to the Word of God, and as highly conducive to the desired uniformity of belief and the suppressing of heresy, the Assembly expressed its thankful acknowledgment of the special mercy of God in that so excellent a Confession had been prepared and agreed upon in both Kingdoms, as a great strengthening of the true Reformed religion against the common enemies thereof. At the same time the Assembly adopted a series of propositions, prepared by Baillie, one of the commissioners to the Westminster Assembly, which were designed to exclude all Erastian interpretations of the language of the Symbols respecting the relations between the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities. To this step they were doubtless impelled by a reasonable fear that the influence of Parliament might have led their brethren of Westminster to some possible swerving from the true doctrine respecting the headship of Christ, and the strict independency of his church from all political control.

The subsequent history of the symbols in the two Kingdoms presents a singular and suggestive contrast. In England, Presbyterian Calvinism speedily became a dissenting fragment, possessing little influence either religious or civil. The glory of its name was early dimmed; and the spiritual decline which followed during the century succeeding, was perhaps a natural consequence. The English mind preferred to dwell in the flowery plains of Moderatism, rather than to live amid the rugged summits of a positive Calvinism. Multitudes chose easier and more palatable notions of biblical truth, and readily counted themselves released from the

stern and searching demands respecting duty made by the Presbyterian formularies. It was, in the quaint language of the Savoy Declaration, a time of aestuation, fluxes and refluxes of great varieties of spirits, doctrines, opinions and occurrences . . accompanied with powerful persuasions and temptations to seduce men from the truth. Nor was the disappointing struggle for political supremacy and state patronage calculated to confirm men in the faith, or to strengthen the religious life within the church. A relapse, first from the practical demands of such a type of belief as had been formulated at Westminster, and then from the cardinal tenets of that formula, might have been expected. Such a relapse followed; and within a hundred years from the dissolution of the Assembly, English Presbyterianism had largely become Unitarian.

In Scotland, where the political element was relatively less and the religious element relatively much more prominent, a very different result followed. There the doctrinal principles of the Symbols became the basis of church life as well as of church form; the Calvinistic theology produced a corresponding type of religion; the truth developed itself in practice; and, with the local and transient exception of Moderatism, the Presbyterian system of belief became the controlling power spiritually within the Scottish realm. Of the potency of these convictions and experiences, the subsequent struggles of Scotland to maintain the church she had adopted, her determined and prolonged resistance to the aggression both of the Monarchy and of English Episcopacy, her sufferings unto blood for the truth and her heroic triumphs, bear ample testimony. Even the subsequent conflicts of opinion within the Presbyterian household, the divisions and subdivisions around minor issues, the ruptures and disruptions of the past two centuries,—needless and painful as most of them appear,—signally illustrate the strength of the one creed to which all parties still adhered, and in which all alike gloried. In both the established and the voluntary forms, and under all varieties, the Presbyterianism of Westminster, doctrinal and ecclesiastical, is still the strength and the glory of the church of Christ in Scotland. In Ireland also, existing Presbyterianism, transplanted from Scotland and closely affiliated with it, retains the same strong characteristics, and blossoms out under conditions more adverse into the same practical and spiritual fruitage.

The record of the transplantation of the Westminster Symbols to America, and of their adoption and position here, deserves

special notice.* During the closing decades of the seventeenth century considerable numbers of Presbyterians, especially from Scotland and Ireland, emigrated to this continent, bringing with them their ecclesiastical standards and usages. These colonists settled principally in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia; and wherever they went, they carried with them their ancestral faith. Churches were formed at various points; and in 1705, or 1706, some of these churches were associated together in the original Presbytery at Philadelphia. The question of a doctrinal basis gradually became prominent, especially where the immigrant from Britain and the colonist from New England came to be associated in the one community and church. On and after the formation of the first Synod in 1717, this question became still more important,—all indeed accepting the Presbyterian doctrine as well as order, yet differing as to the principle of subscription, and the extent of ecclesiastical authority in matters of belief. In 1729, the Adopting Act was passed, determining for the time the nature of the subscription required, and making the Symbols in their totality the standard of American Presbyterianism. Among the causes leading to this result may be named especially the doctrinal defection already becoming apparent in some portions of Britain, and the rise of some new opinions, diverging somewhat from the primitive Calvinism, on the part of those who had entered the Presbyterian ministry from New England.

24. The Westminster Symbols in America; the Adopting Act.—Theories of subscription.

The Adopting Act was not passed unanimously or without resistance. Some members of the Synod, though personally sound in the faith, were opposed to all creeds drawn up by uninspired men, as involving an assumption of spiritual authority in matters of belief, not warranted by the Word of God. Others were simply opposed to such literal and rigid subscription as was demanded generally by the foreign members, and also to the proposal that all who refused to sign on these terms should be excluded from the organization. The final adoption was consequently a compromise, recognizing the force of these objections, but calling for belief in the Symbols simply as being in all the essential and necessary articles good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine. The spirit of this compromise was eminently

*GILLETT, History of the Presbyterian Church; WEBSTER, same title; HODGE, Constitutional History: Briggs, Amer. Presbyterianism; THOMPSON, History of the Presbyterian Churches in America.

fraternal; room was left for differences on all articles not essential and necessary; and it was agreed that none should challenge or criticise another in respect, as was said, to the non-essential and not-necessary points of doctrine. In the same Act, the Synod further declared its own divergence from the Symbols in regard to civil control in matters of religion; denying all such right of interference, whether in respect to the exercise of ministerial authority, or to prosecution by the state for any departure from the authorized faith.

In 1736, an attempt was made to compel a more rigid subscription to the Symbols as thus modified. It was maintained that they ought to be accepted without the least variation or alteration, and with no exception in favor of personal scruple or conviction. Though this view was not sustained, the issue thus raised continued to present itself; and while all parties adhered to the Symbols, they differed widely as to the amount of obligation incurred. On one side, the freer view of subscription opened the door for serious deviations from sound doctrine, and in some instances led on to radical departures from the common faith. On the other side, stress laid on mere doctrinal soundness, mere conformity to rules and ordinances, mere regard for the letter, resulted in the neglect of the spirit, and in the decline of piety itself. In 1741, these differences culminated in an open rupture; and American Presbyterianism was for the first time rent asunder, partly on account of real difference in doctrine, but chiefly for difference in this matter of subscription. Seventeen years afterward, this rupture was healed, and the church became united substantially on the former basis,—though perhaps with some increased emphasis of the stricter theory.

In 1788, the United Synod carried through an important alteration in those chapters of the Confession which treat of the relations between the church and the state, and planted itself firmly on the voluntary principle, and on the entire independence of the church from all secular control. Religious liberty became by this change not only a right to be maintained by the Presbyterian church for itself, but also a privilege to be freely accorded by it to all other Christian communions, and even to all forms of error or unbelief. The old theory of subscription remained in force, however, until the practical and doctrinal diversities, springing up during the first three decades of the present century, gave occasion for the introduction again of the old issue. The disruption of 1837, while primarily growing out of questions of organization and method, and partly caused by real differences in respect

to certain doctrines or statements of doctrine, was also produced largely by a tendency to extreme positions on both sides in the matter of subscription. In general, the two separated bodies may be said to have represented either the more strict and literal or the more broad and substantial theory on this point. In the Reunion of 1869, there was cordial agreement around the acceptance of the Symbols as containing, in the language of the irenic Synod of 1758, an orthodox and excellent system of doctrine, to be received in its proper historical sense, and with just liberty of interpretation, in the true temper of loyalty and of love. Under this agreement, the leading Presbyterian body in the United States now exists as a representative on this continent of the Calvinism of Westminster.

The Symbols were also adopted by the churches of New England, as the Council of Savoy had already approved them, for substance of doctrine, at the Synod of Cambridge, 1648; the Synod of Boston, 1680; and the Synod of Saybrook, 1708. The Shorter Catechism especially was long received authoritatively as expressing the essential faith of these churches, and is still regarded by many as among the most valuable expositions of the Calvinistic system. The Declarations of more recent national Councils do not vary from that system in any essential features;—though they possibly lay greater stress on the broad and noble principle, believed in at Westminster but more fully enunciated at Savoy, that amongst all Christian States and Churches there ought to be vouchsafed a forbearance and mutual indulgence unto saints of all persuasions that keep unto and hold fast the necessary foundation of faith and holiness, in all other matters extra fundamental, whether of Faith or Order.

Other Presbyterian bodies of later origin, and organized especially from representatives of the varieties of Presbyterianism existing in Scotland, have either modified the original Confession as to the matter of civil control, and to the nature and scope of ecclesiastical authority, or have received the Confession in its original form, appending to it authoritative testimonies, setting forth their several departures from it. The Cumberland church, wholly American in origin, has made more extensive alterations, amounting to a full revision in both the Confession and the Catechisms,—chiefly for the purpose of eliminating from them all appearance of fatalism, and of presenting in such revision a more mediate, less decisive type of Calvinism. In these bodies, the rule as to subscription ranges from extreme rigidity in some

to a simple and perhaps inadequate acceptance for substance of doctrine on the part of others.

25. General character and position of the Symbols: nature of their influence.

The general character, position and influence of the Westminster Symbols will be easily realized in the light of this introductory survey, though the subject will be much more readily appreciated at the close of the studies here proposed. What we have already seen justifies the statement that, in several particulars, these Symbols may be regarded as the most significant group of formularies produced by Protestantism during the remarkable period of the Reformation:

First: In respect to the amount of time, and the degree of deliberation in their preparation, they present the nearest Protestant parallel to the Canons and Decrees of Trent. Most of the other Protestant Confessions were framed in a comparatively brief period of time. The Synod of Dort held but one hundred and forty-four sessions, and adjourned within six months. The Confession of Augsburg was prepared at intervals during the summer of 1530. The Second Helvetic Confession, the most widely received among the Reformed creeds of the Continent, was prepared chiefly by the single hand of Bullinger, and adopted after a few conferences among the representatives of the provinces and churches interested in its construction. The Heidelberg Catechism, which approaches most nearly the Westminster formularies in the statement of doctrine, though revised and approved by a general synod held at the place whose name it bears, was drafted substantially by Ursinus and Olevianus under the appointment of Frederick, Elector of the Palatinate. After the time spent by the Assembly of Westminster in ecclesiastical debate, and in the development of its scheme for making Britain Presbyterian, is deducted, it will still be apparent that no creed of the Reformation, in either the length of time, or the number of persons concerned, or in the other elements calculated to give such a formulary prominence as the product of rare deliberation, can be compared with the Symbols which that Assembly gave to Protestantism.

Secondly: This prominence is no less apparent when we consider the extent and heartiness of the acceptance which these Symbols, together with the form of polity associated with them, have obtained. Among all varieties of Protestantism, Presbyterianism is obviously most widely diffused, and most nearly ecumenical: and among the Protestant Confessions, none is so

extensively received, none so widely revered, as that on which this Presbyterianism rests. It may especially be questioned whether any takes such strong hold on those who accept it, or so vigorously regulates the thoughts and convictions of its adherents. The reverence paid to it sometimes seems like idolatry itself. The unwillingness to revise it, or even to adopt explanatory declarations or testimonies respecting it, is significant proof of its amazing power over the mind and the heart. The Augsburg Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism are the only Protestant creeds which could justly be compared with it in these respects.

Thirdly: Much of this prominence is due as well to the structure of these remarkable Symbols, as to the manner of their preparation and the extent of their diffusion. Prepared after all the rest, and at a time when many of the issues of earlier Protestantism had been settled, they betray less of the provincial narrowness incident to those earlier struggles,—less of the merely partisan feeling and of the intense dogmatism which characterized largely the preceding century,—less of the mere antagonism to Rome which in some respects warped all the earlier creeds. Theology, according to the Protestant conception of it, had been more thoroughly formulated, and was capable of being more calmly, more broadly, more conclusively stated. The principle of toleration had at least received its first recognition, and its benign influence was felt, even amid the sharp diversities which in some cases agitated the Assembly. Traces of fraternal compromise, even on points which at first were centers of strenuous discussion, such as the order of the decrees or the scope of the Gospel or the divine right of the Presbyterian polity, are frequently apparent. There are also many indications, as will appear during these studies, not only of a purpose to incorporate whatever was worthiest in the antecedent creeds, but of a disposition to harmonize in belief, so far as possible, with other Protestant and especially with the Reformed communions. Compared with the Canons of Dort, their chief rival, the Symbols are less technical and dogmatic, less strictly theological; while compared with the Catechism of Heidelberg, they reveal a more thorough doctrinal structure, a more elaborate grouping and union of truth, without the sacrifice of that fine spiritual tone for which the latter formulary is justly prized. This combination of theological construction, with practical expression and adaptation—of an organic completeness not equaled by any preceding creed, with a matured and moderated Christian temper, must be regarded as one of their peculiar excellencies. Traces of the period with its special conflicts are indeed

apparent, as we shall have frequent occasion to note, both in the thought and in the spirit of these Symbols, yet they exhibit much in both spirit and thought which the common Christianity for all time will continue to appreciate as the most consummate flower of historic Protestantism.

Reserving further statements respecting the excellence of the Symbols until their doctrinal contents shall have passed under specific review, and the theological system embodied in them shall have been methodically defined, we may proceed at once to survey the broad domain to be traversed, and to mark in outline the contemplated course of investigation. The Confession follows in general, not the order of the ancient creeds, or the methods of the earlier Protestant theologians, but rather the more systematic plan of development exhibited in the best theological treatises of the latter half of the seventeenth century. It commences with the Bible as the source and foundation of all belief; then proceeds with the doctrine of Scripture concerning God in his being and attributes, purposes and administration, providential and moral; then discusses the creation, character and fall of man, with the consequences of that fall; and then presents Christ in his person and in his mediatorial work in its main aspects and issues. From these fundamental positions, it proceeds to discuss such saving truth in its more practical relations,—to set forth the plan of salvation and the process of salvation as illustrated in the various phases and experiences of the Christian life, and also to expound the moral law as the rule of life, and present the duties which naturally spring into view on that basis, and are legitimately required of all who believe in Christ. These discussions are followed by an exposition of the sacraments and the church, of the relations of the church to the state, of the authority of councils, and the right and limits of church discipline; and the whole is concluded with two chapters, following the order of the Apostolic Creed, on death and the intermediate life, resurrection and the final judgment. Extensive as this list of topics seems, it is justly questioned whether there are not some important factors in Christian theology, such as the doctrine of the Gospel in its scope, and of the Holy Spirit in his person and work, which are either omitted or too incidentally and cursorily treated. Systematic as the construction is, and marked and strong as is the method pursued, it is also questioned with some reason whether this is absolutely the best grouping possible,—whether the method be not more theo-

26. Proposed analysis. Method of the Symbols: method of study: general object.

logical than biblical, and whether the great realities of grace might not be set in connections, articulated into a system, such as would bring out into more glorious light the grand central facts concerning Christ and his Salvation. These are queries which will frequently recur to view at later stages in the studies proposed.

The method pursued in the Catechisms, while resembling that of the Confession, is yet simpler and more natural. They were constructed not for the purpose of presenting a consistent and complete system of doctrine, but rather—to use the suggestive phrase of Reynolds—in that way which is most for ingenerating knowledge; or so as, in the language of Gillespie, to condescend to the capacity of the common and unlearned. Thus their teaching is divided easily into the two main sections, belief and duty. The presentation of what we are to believe, includes most of the cardinal elements in the theology of the Confession: what is our duty, as consequent upon such belief, is set forth in an elaborate exposition of the Ten Commandments, and of the form of Prayer taught by Our Lord, and in an associated exposition of saving faith and its fruits. Though both Catechisms adopt this more simple division, the Larger adheres under it more closely to the theological terminology of the Confession itself. Both are to be regarded as authoritative as well as the Confession, as are also the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline, and the Directory for Worship, so far as they help to explain or emphasize the doctrinal system incorporated in the distinctively theological formularies.*

In presenting as is proposed, a compendium or summary of this doctrinal system, it will be desirable to group the chapters of the Confession together accordlng to the theological scheme followed by the compilers, rather than to comment on each chapter separately. A study of these chapters as arranged will make it manifest that they are capable of such grouping, and that what may be termed a system of theology can be built up without disruption or confusion from the material thus furnished. By such treatment the teachings of the Catechisms also may be set in more palpable

*See Mitchell, Westminster Assembly, Lect. XII. and also his collection of Catechisms of the Second Reformation, and that of Bonar, Catechisms of the Scottish Reformation. Schaff (Creeds of Christ: Vol. I.) pronounces the Shorter Catechism one of the three typical catechisms of Protestantism which are likely to last till the end of time: see his remarks on the Protestant Catechisms generally. On the authority of the Catechisms consult Presbyterian Digest, *in loc.* See Commentaries on the Catechisms, by Vincent, Fisher, Green, Boyd and others. The first extensive Body of Divinity published in America, 1726, by Samuel Willard, President of Harvard, was a series of two hundred and fifty discourses on the Shorter Catechism.

relations to those of the Confession, and the real unity pervading the entire series may be brought more clearly into view. It will also be more practicable under this method to compare the doctrines of these formularies with those of the three ancient creeds and of the other Protestant confessions, and also with Roman and Greek symbolism, and with the chief product of more recent investigations in the general field of Christian doctrine. Special attention will also be paid in this connection to the various Declarations and Testimonies, and to the actual and proposed Revisions, which bear directly upon present interpretation of these venerable Symbols. If the result shall be a clear, just, liberal, comprehensive estimate of what is essential in the Presbyterian system of doctrine, and what is in fact believed by those who now accept these formularies as the standard and index of their faith, the chief aim of these Lectures will be fully attained. It remains simply to be added that such aim not only precludes all dogmatic narrowness and all controversial purpose or temper, but requires also a broad and cordial sympathy with all varieties of the common Calvinism, and no less truly with all other types of evangelical belief. The doctrinal specialties in which intelligent Calvinists now differ, are of very small moment compared with those primal and commanding truths in which they are consciously and profoundly agreed. Nor is it any less true that the surviving disagreements of evangelical Protestantism are incomparably less important than are those fundamental doctrines of grace, those saving verities of Scripture, in regard to which all true Protestants of whatever name are consciously and cordially One.

LECTURE SECOND—THE HOLY SCRIPTURE.

REVELATION, ITS NATURE AND PROCESS: THE CONTENTS OF SCRIPTURE: ITS AUTHENTICITY, AUTHORITY AND ADEQUACY: RIGHT AND DUTY OF PRIVATE INTERPRETATION.

CONFESSION OF FAITH, Chap. I; XIV, Sec. ii; XXI, Sec. i; LARGER CATECHISM, Answers 2–5; 154–160; SHORTER CATECHISM, 2–3; 89–90.

1. Protestantism and Scripture: Place of Revelation in the Symbols.

The formal principle of the Reformation was the Supremacy of Scripture, as distinct from either patristric tradition, or the decrees of councils, or the imperative teachings of the Church through its papal head. The Articles of Smalcald spoke for all Protestantism in tersely affirming (II.) that the Word of God should frame articles of faith, otherwise no one, not even an angel. It was on this basis only that Protestantism as a new and more intelligent and spiritual type of Christianity could safely rest. The Bible, as supreme above all other sources or authorities,—the Bible as an authenticated message from God to each soul of man, to be studied and interpreted by each in the temper of loyalty to its divine Author, was therefore seated on the throne as the great arbitrator of doctrine, the true norm of belief, the regulative factor in both faith and life. Hence the prominence which is given to the Bible and its claims in the various symbols of the period: hence the clear, strong, decisive affirmations concerning its authenticity and authority, which are found everywhere in both the creeds and the theologies of primitive Protestantism. See Augsburg Conf.: Conclusion: Formula Concordiae, Introd. I–II: Zwinglian Articles, 1, 5, 13: First Helvetic Conf. I–II: Second Helv. Cap. I: Heidelberg Cat. 20–21: French Conf. II–IV: Belgic Conf. Art. III–VII: First Scotch XIX–XX: Thirty-Nine Art. VI–VII: and especially the Irish Articles, 1 to 7; from which the form and language of the Westminster statements were largely derived.

The Westminster Confession, like most of these formularies, starts not from the abstract doctrine of the decrees, nor from any other speculative or philosophic basis, but immediately from the

primary and fundamental fact of Revelation. More fully than any of them it presents to view the vital need of a supernatural communication from God to man contemplated as a sinner, the modes in which such a communication was actually made, and the several writings which combine to make up that communication. As against the Roman theory of tradition in whatever form, and against the opposite theory of an inner light, whether derived from reason or from the independent illumination of the Holy Spirit, it affirms the completeness and authoritativeness, and the entire adequacy of this Inspired Word. In contrast with all other teaching, and all assumption by human authority in matters of belief, it asserts both the right of private interpretation, and the imperative obligation of every one to study the Scriptures for himself. In opposition to the conception of an absolute religion, grounded in the universal reason, in which historic Christianity with its specific disclosures is to be merged at last, it declares this written communication from God to be both sole and final basis of religion, not for any given race or period, but for humanity universally,—affirming that man can never outgrow this Revelation, and that salvation must always flow from faith in this as the perfect and the ultimate message of God to the race. It is a suggestive fact that the Symbols start in this way, not from any philosophic principle, or from any specific doctrine in the Christian scheme, however fundamental, but directly from the Word of God as the only rule alike of belief and of practice. It is also suggestive that their affirmations on this cardinal point are so full, clear, decisive that no important enlargement or alteration of them has been made requisite by the investigations and discussions of the past two centuries around this primal truth.

From the outset of the insular Reformation, the supremacy of the Bible as the very Word of God, its absolute authoritativeness within the religious sphere, had been eminently a fundamental principle of British Protestantism. Abundant illustrations of this fact appear in the formularies of the sixteenth century in both England and Scotland. The strong Article (XX) in the Scotch Confession on the Power and Authority of General Councils, sets up the Goddis Worde as the final standard of belief and the ultimate test of all human teachings. The Thirty-Nine Articles (VI) affirm the entire sufficiency and authoritativeness of the Holy Scriptures in all things necessary to salvation. Amid all the religious and ecclesiastical struggles which marked the first decades of the seventeenth century, there was—as the Irish Articles

clearly indicate—no appreciable swerving on any side from this fundamental principle. And the student of the deliberations and the acts of the Westminster Assembly will not fail to discover such supreme, loving, unflinching loyalty to the Bible signalizing and controlling the proceedings of that venerable body throughout. Its members were not only learned in the Scriptures, but devout believers in all that Scripture taught them, and determined in their purpose—according to the pledge or vow approved by Parliament and solemnly taken by each member at the first organization—that whatever they affirmed as doctrine should be both tested and sustained by the Word of God, and by that Word only.

2. Man capable of receiving a Revelation: The light and law of Nature.

The existence of intellectual and spiritual capacities in man, qualifying him in some sense to receive and appropriate a Revelation, is directly declared in the Symbols. As created, man had, it is said; (Ch. IV : ii) a *reasonable* as well as immortal soul, and was *endued with knowledge* as well as true holiness; having *the law of God written on his heart*, and possessing both intelligence to apprehend, and capacity of conscience to feel the claims of that law. Nor are these high capabilities, though impaired by sin, so far ruined as to render man incapable as a sinner either of knowing the truth as God may reveal it, or of appreciating the evidences and the authority by which the truth is endorsed. There is an inward *light of nature* (Ch. I : i) to which revelation may and does directly appeal: there is a native reason, an inborn conscience, a soul in man, which can and does respond to that appeal. The phrase, light of nature, makes its appearance again and again; Conf. I : vi; X : iv; XX : iv; XXI : i; and L. C. 2, 60, 151. We may note also the parallel phrases, *law wrttten in their hearts*, *gifts which they had*, *law of the religion they do profess*, works of creation and providence as instructing men concerning God: also, the striking statement respecting the uses and operation of the moral law, L. C. 149–151. This light of nature is sometimes represented as simply the action of our natural intelligence in the sphere of religious truth,—sometimes as a higher intuitional faculty, the reason distinctively,—sometimes as if it were a peculiar intellectual or moral elevation making such truth more apparent and impressive. It is, comprehensively, the capacity to perceive and appreciate certain spiritual verities, even without the aid of revelation. The kindred phrase, *law of nature*, is sometimes used

to indicate natural illumination, as well as that moral rule and guidance which nature supplies.

The possession of such endowments is constantly assumed in the Symbols. They indeed emphasize very strongly the darkness and obliquity of mind induced by sin, and the inadequacy of the human reason to judge rightly of the claim of many specific truths revealed in the Scriptures; justly affirming (VI : ii) that *all the parts and faculties of soul and body are defiled by transgression*—rendered inefficient and inaccurate in their action concerning divine things. They also strongly assert the corruption of the moral sensibilities, and especially of the conscience, in consequence of such transgression,—the effectual call of the Spirit manifesting itself as truly in *the heart* as in the understanding, and carrying with it the restoration of conscience and the sanctifying of every ethical capacity. They especially declare and emphasize the deadness of the perverted human will; its indisposition or aversion *to any spiritual good* (IX : iii); its strong instinctive hostility to all the Law and all the Word of God. Yet with equal clearness and strength they insist on such remaining degree of capacity in man as renders him fully and forever accountable to the divine law, and which especially makes it sinful in him to turn away from Christ as the eternal Word and Revealer of divine things. They present the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing what man is to believe (S. C. 3) and therefore is capable of believing. They enumerate the truths which human faith is required to embrace: they declare the universal obligation to hear and heed the Gospel; they condemn indifference and unbelief, on the ground that sinners are in some true sense capable of paying attention to saving truth, and of resting upon it as the Word of God. While they carefully guard against the inference that sinful men will in fact exercise these capacities savingly, apart from the influence of the revealing and convincing Spirit, they never pass over to the opposite extreme, or deny to man the possession of qualities such as would enable him to receive or to apprehend a revelation, if given.

No conception of Revelation can be sound or satisfactory which does not rest on these cardinal propositions. Waiving here the question whether man, having such endowments, really needs any supernatural communication to acquaint him with truth and with duty,—waiving also the remoter question whether God can hold communication with man supernaturally, we must plant ourselves once for all on the fundamental doctrine that man even while sinful has faculties and capacities to which such a communication, if

made, can successfully appeal. We are to be guarded on one side against the impression that these capabilities are so far affected by sin as to be worthless, and on the other against the still worse impression that they are in no degree so affected. There is in the sinner, and even in the regenerated soul, a degree of mental obscuration and deadness in sensibility, as well as of weakness in purpose, which renders it certain that left to themselves both sinner and saint will misapprehend and misuse any revelation when given; and which makes necessary some further supernatural action upon as well as for them, in order to render such divine communication useful in their spiritual life.

3. Nature and Revelation, how related. Natural Theology and Religion; Revelation necessary.

The existence and the moral teaching of an external world, revealing to man certain preliminary truths, and preparing him to receive the higher truths of Revelation, are also presupposed in the Symbols. What is called in an outward as well as inward sense *the light of nature*, disclosing to his view in all the varied aspects of the material universe the being and presence and character of God, and making him acquainted with many of the primary relations between God and man, must be recognized as one of the fundamental facts in human experience. What are styled *the works of creation and providence* are here represented as manifesting, even to all men though sinful, the goodness, wisdom and power of God, (I: i) and we are taught that these teachings of nature are so definite and so extensive as to leave men inexcusable for any indulgence of sin against the Being so made manifest.

Natural theology and natural religion are thus presupposed and affirmed in the Symbols as in Scripture. This natural theology not only furnishes evidences and proofs of the existence of the Deity, and suggests at many points his qualities and his character: it also brings into view the reality and claim of law as regnant in the universe, the existence of moral as well as natural order and government, and the dependent and responsible position of man as a part of this vast system of things. And if to the testimony of external nature on these points we add the decisive confirmation to be derived from the study of man himself—from thoughtful consideration of his constitution and endowments as well as his physical structure, and especially of his rational and moral faculties, and the aspirations and capabilities of which he seems to be possessor, both the area and the substance of natural theology become vastly enlarged. Indeed, the witness to the wisdom and

goodness and power of God, derived from such investigation of man himself regarded as a creature, is in some respects far more impressive and conclusive than any derived from external nature, even in her most glorious forms. The Symbols seem in this respect, as in some others, to have anticipated largely that change in the great argument for the existence of God by which the proof derived from what man himself is as a rational and spiritual being, is taking precedence of the older arguments drawn by Paley and his successors from the study of the external world—the world of nature.

Of a theology originating in this way, a natural religion is an essential product and result; on this basis such a religion becomes not only possible, but in some degree necessary and imperative. Such disclosures tend to develop that sense of fear of the supernatural, which is the main sentiment in all the lower varieties of human faith; they awaken the consciousness of dependence also, both natural and spiritual, on the superhuman power thus discovered. In their higher forms, they afford room for the sense of gratitude, for the consciousness of obligation, for the principle and spirit of duty, and even for the emotions of love and devotion and the hope of immortality. On this basis religion as a species of moral sensibility, and even as a practical rule of life, may and must exist and manifest itself in the human soul. Without the more elevated teaching of the law of God as given in Scripture, men do thus in apostolic phrase become a law unto themselves. While as yet untaught and unvitalized by the immediate action of the Holy Spirit, they may and do discern within themselves the vigorous accusings or excusings of conscience, and may and do tremble in view of a possible judgment to come. A natural religion as well as a natural theology thus exists; and all men give evidence of being in some degree under its quickening and subduing power.

Yet we are to guard ourselves against the inference that man needs no other revelation than this, and no higher religious life than that awakened by this process. The Longer Catechism of the Graeco-Russian church declares in language which evangelical Protestantism would endorse, that man may have some knowledge of God by contemplation of those things which he has created, but this knowledge is imperfect and insufficient, and can serve only as a preparation for faith, or as a help toward the knowledge of God from his Revelation. So, while we are taught in the Symbols that men are left in an *inexcusable* state on account of their sin against this light of nature, and while they are justly condemned without

the law for their failure to do what natural religion thus requires, we are also taught that these disclosures though preliminary and precious are (I: i) *not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation.* The Symbols go so far in this direction as to affirm (X. iv) that even those who are *diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature*—who are in fact obedient to the law of the religion they do profess—will not be saved, if they also reject when it is made known to them, the higher law of life revealed in Christ. These natural revelations may instruct, enlighten, direct; they may warn against sin, and summon to duty; they may call for the exercise of spiritual sensibilities, and inspire to love and worship. But when man has failed to yield to their sweet influences, and has become a sinner against all their warnings, they reveal no way of escape from the guilt so incurred. They open no door of hope to the soul thus estranged from God. While therefore we are not to deny the reality of the theology or the religion of nature, or to indulge in disparagement of them as if they had but little worth, we are not on the other hand to assert their sufficiency, or to assume that no higher revelation is needful. The human reason, however clarified, cannot be regarded as a source of authority respecting divine things, in any way co-ordinate with the revealed Word. Butler wisely says that, though reason is the candle of the Lord within us, it can afford no light where it does not shine, nor judge where it has no principles to judge upon. Deism, in its best varieties, is to be commended for the exposition it has given of the teachings and moral demands of nature. Positivism is valuable so far as it gathers up these scattered rays, concentrates them in scientific unity, and presses them home upon the human conscience. The contributions which both physical science and metaphysical philosophy are constantly making to natural theology and natural religion, are greatly to be prized for what they are;—but mostly, perhaps, for the clear evidence they afford of the absolute necessity for some further, some supernatural knowledge of divine things. It is indeed one essential part of their mission to prove to the world, by every new discovery, by every fresh advance, the indispensableness of Revelation.

4. Fact and Nature of Revelation; Objections noted.

The fact that such a Revelation has actually been given, is not only affirmed, but to some extent argumentatively sustained in the Symbols. Postponing all inquiry as to the specific contents of this Revelation, or to the positive evidences of its authenticity or authority, we may here note simply the general

fact thus affirmed,—that God has superadded to all the disclosures of nature and to the appeals of nature to the religious element in man, another and higher communication, peculiar in method and in form, peculiarly certified also, and designed both to impart a larger knowledge and to stimulate in man a nobler faith and a worthier type of spiritual life. This is the proper significance of the term, Revelation,—a supernatural disclosure and impartation of religious truth rather than ordinary or scientific knowledge, conferred by methods which are also mainly supernatural, for the purpose of bringing about certain supernatural results in the beliefs, experiences and lives of men, both individually and as organized in human society, and involving their highest welfare both for time and for eternity. As the teachings of nature were insufficient, *it pleased the Lord* (I : i) *to reveal himself and to declare his will;* meeting in this way the great religious exigencies of mankind. While it is said that this manifestation is made specifically *unto his Church* or unto his people,—a statement which illustrates the strong hold of the doctrine of particularistic election upon the mind of the Assembly, and which of itself might convey an inadequate conception of the nature and aim of the Revelation,—we have abundant warrant elsewhere for affirming that the Bible was held to be for man as man—for the church and for humanity also. It is given to all as (S. C. 2) *the only rule to direct them how they may glorify and enjoy God*, which is the chief duty, not of the church only, but of all mankind. It teaches (S. C. 3) what all alike *are to believe concerning God*, and what *duty God requires* alike of all. This Revelation, is therefore, as described in the Symbols, universal, perpetual, complete.

Objections to such a conception of Revelation have been urged on the ground that such supernatural communication is both impossible and needless. It is asserted that God has chosen to limit himself to what may be classed as natural modes of declaring his existence and character and will,—that he has given us capacities for study, and has furnished in ourselves and in the external universe a vast and adequate field of study respecting religious things,—and that by this arrangement he has in fact precluded himself from the need, if not from the possibility of any further or supra-natural disclosure. It is especially affirmed that there are, and even that there can be, no supernatural modes of communication between him and men; and that all claims to such supernaturalness are on philosophic grounds to be rejected as incredible and spurious. But surely there can be no philosophic objection

to the proposition that such a Being as God cannot be limited in such a matter except by his own choice; and that whenever he chooses, he may use any means, natural or otherwise, which may appear to him best suited to his sovereign purpose. The limitation, if there be any, is one which he has imposed upon himself, and which therefore he may at any time remove. Nor does his adoption of one mode or of one class of modes habitually, in any degree prohibit the use of other modes whenever these are found to be desirable. Nor again can our inability to comprehend or to conceive of the mode in which revelation is made, or even our inability to believe in such a revelation, so far as such inability has a moral rather than a rational basis, militate against the credibility of the fact, whenever such revelation is actually made.

God must also be the supreme judge as well as the sovereign agent, in the matter of declaring his will to man. It is not ours to say whether the knowledge received by the light of nature is adequate,—whether man does or does not need more extensive and emphatic disclosures of truth and duty. Especially is this apparent when we remember how far sin has impaired the human powers,—how imperfectly man conceives and uses what God has communicated by natural processes,—how little at the best man can learn from nature respecting the urgent and vital problem of salvation from sin and its results. Here God only is a competent arbiter; it is his alone to determine what is a *sufficient* and *effectual* Revelation. One reason for such a communication is expressed in the words (XXI:i), *that He may not be worshiped according to the imaginations or devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan.* That this Revelation is *necessary unto salvation* is to the Divine Mind the grand underlying reason for it. The awful fact of sin, with all its terrific effects upon the mind and heart of the race, is the essential warrant for its existence, and the Bible justifies itself forever by its demonstrated adaptations to this great, this universal need.

Both the possibility and the necessity for some declaration of the mind and will of God in supernatural as well as in natural method and form must therefore be recognized. In such a case a priori reasonings adverse to such revelation are clearly invalid: in fact, a priori considerations, so far as available, strongly favor the opposite conclusion. An eminent theologian has justly affirmed that no insuperable difficulty can be urged logically, metaphysically or physiologically; a revelation, he adds, is just as conceivable as a sun. Such a Being as God is, can use miracles, prophecies, theophanies, voices in the air, wonders in the sky, to show men his

will, just as readily as he can use the familiar facts of nature or the ordinary witness of the human conscience. If He could create the physical universe with all its elements and energies, it is plain that he can produce any changes in that universe, miraculous or otherwise, which may in any way subserve his own sovereign or gracious purposes. How pressing the need of such added light and guidance is, even man himself in the bewilderment and terror of his sin, and in the intensity of his longings after deliverance from both its power and its curse, may in some measure apprehend, though that necessity must ever be one which God alone can fully estimate. The disclosure not only of human sinfulness, but of grace as the antithesis of sin, furnishes the justifying reason for such supernatural revealment,—just as it furnishes the ground for the gracious incarnation of Him who was the divine Word made flesh for us men and for our salvation. And as the divine resources are boundless, and this human need universal, it follows that this Revelation, if given, will be designed not for some chosen portion of the human family specially, but for humanity as such. Though each individual of the race may not be possessed of it, and though *the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the Word* occurs only where(I: vi) *the inward illumination of the Spirit* is enjoyed, yet in the idea of it Revelation must be regarded as sent comprehensively to the world, and as sustaining precious relations to the moral state and destiny of every son and daughter of Adam. This is true although as a matter of fact the divine communication to man in the Scriptures was given progressively, through long centuries of time, and given at first to a selected nation, rather than to mankind universally, to be through that nation finally transmitted to the race.

5. Process of Revelation: Nature of Inspiration: general description.

Contemplating Revelation at this point as a process rather than a product, the term must be regarded broadly as including the entire procedure, whatever be the form or method, by which God makes known to men such superadded truth or such enlarged conceptions of duty or of grace. The Symbols describe the divine disclosure as various and complex in method as well as universal in scope. We are taught that in its earlier stages the plan of redemption was manifested by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and *other types and ordinances* delivered to the people of the Jews, all fore-signifying Christ to come, (VII. v.) *which were for that time sufficient and efficacious*, to instruct or build up the elect in faith. So within the sphere of physical nature *in divers manners*, as by

the burning bush, the pillar of cloud and fire, the Shechinah or the Urim and Thummim, as well as by the mouth of man, did God make known his mind and will. These remarkable manifestations in nature seem to culminate in the disincarnate voice three times heard in the air, (at the baptism, at the transfiguration, and just before the crucifixion) in attestation of the person and mission of our Lord. In a far higher sense is Christ himself the incarnate Revelation, disclosing both before and after his advent, in a manner far above all other communications, the truths essential to salvation. He is himself the Logos, uttering these truths not by inspiration, but in virtue of his own nature, and of his specific function in the Godhead as the eternal voice and message of Deity. The confessional conception of Christ as Prophet (L. C. 43; S. C. 24) implies not merely that his prophecies were higher in quality and scope than all others, or that he was the historical head of the prophetic order, but also that he was intrinsically and eternally the revealer of the divine mind and will, and that in his person and his words are incorporated all the treasures of spiritual wisdom and of saving knowledge. In him therefore we see the process of revelation, not as we behold it in physical demonstrations or disincarnate voices, in types and emblems, but in the highest possible form and measure; God himself directly speaking in and through the Incarnate Word.

In a more specific sense the term, Revelation, is used to describe the divine agency or action upon particular men chosen of God in order that they might receive and communicate to the world his revealed will. The notion of a general revelation merely, imparted simultaneously to mankind in the aggregate—a cosmic disclosure in which all men share or may share alike—is inadequate here. God has in fact chosen rather to impart the knowledge of his will to elect persons, whom he uses as his agents in the transmission of illuminating and saving truth to the world. It is impossible to describe the methods in which he first makes known to such men the truths which he afterwards guides them in communicating to the race. That there is such a revealing process, which differs in some essential particulars from all ordinary varieties of mental activity, from the highest stimulations of religious enthusiasm, and even from the most exalted forms of spiritual illumination through the action of the Holy Spirit upon regenerated minds, and which must be referred to God rather than man as its immediate source, is abundantly suggested in the Symbols as in Scripture. *It pleased the Lord* (I : i) *at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal Himself*, and to declare His will; and this

process of revealing and declaration is expressly distinguished in the Confession from the subsequent commitment of *the same wholly unto writing*. Some hints in regard to this process are given to us, as in the dreams and visions of prophets, in the ecstacy of seers, in the angelic communications, and in the spiritual exaltation given, for example, to Paul or to John on the Isle of Patmos. It is also distinguishable in itself, as well as in its results, from all movements of the Holy Spirit in grace upon the minds of sinners, or even of the holiest saints. It is an interior, immediate, active and infallible disclosing to the recipient of the truth which God desires him to impart,—truth whose fullness he may not himself comprehend, but which he receives in order that he may proclaim and *afterwards* record it in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Inspiration is to be regarded simply as a superadded supernatural process, necessitated by the fact and also by the nature of such antecedent revelation. It may not be true in all cases, though it must be true in most, that the recipient himself recognizes the supernatural source and quality of the truth thus given, and distinguishes it by clear lines from the action or product of his own mind. Such elements are clearly perceptible in such particular revelation, though beyond this the process must be viewed as mysterious, and ineffable. That it is in some sense miraculous, is an obvious fact. It is at least a direct descent of divine potency into the sphere of the natural for the securing of certain spiritual ends; and this is the essential conception of a miracle. God, in a word, is disclosed in this process of making known to chosen men his will, in a way and form in which he nowhere makes himself manifest in ordinary experience.

The term, Inspiration, as distinct from Revelation in either of the two senses just named, is defined and limited by the language of the Confession: *Afterward*, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth . . . *to commit the same wholly unto writing*. There is indeed an inspiration of utterance, men of God being moved by the Holy Ghost to speak as well as to record the divine message. There is also an inspiration of act as well as voice, elect persons being animated by the Spirit to the performance of some special work in the interest of the economy of redemption. But as more generally used, the term implies primarily the accurate recording of the divine revelations, however given, so far as such record is deemed by God essential to the spiritual end in view in these revelations. Secondarily it also implies the accurate recording of whatever histories, events, circumstances, laws, doctrines, derived from natural or human sources, may

be regarded by the Divine Spirit as essential in the explanation or enforcement of these revelations. Inspiration is thus the broader term: it is applicable not only to those portions of Scripture which contain direct revelations, but to all the sacred books which make up holy Scripture, and to all the parts and contents of these several books. It is nothing less than a movement of the Holy Spirit upon the minds and wills of the men inspired, by which they were led to produce a volume that is properly ascribed in its totality to God as its Author. Postponing for the moment the speculative problem involved in this proposition, we may properly pause at this point to note the one remarkable quality, the distinguishing supernaturalness, in this process by which it is decisively separated from all ordinary activity even of the most intellectual or most sanctified minds. To regard such inspiration as only a higher variety of mental power or of poetic or religious fervor, such as appears elsewhere in human experience, is to dissipate altogether its divine quality, and also to destroy its religious significance and worth. It is to be specially distinguished from spiritual illumination, even in the highest forms in which such illumination may graciously be induced by the Holy Ghost. Inspiration is a still higher type of activity, produced by the Spirit for a broader and loftier purpose, and characterized by more extensive and more permanent results. In an eminent degree such as is discernible in no other human experience, God must be in this process throughout, supernaturally, immediately, supremely, or it is in no true sense of the term, inspiration.

The speculative query in the case is concerned chiefly with the relations of such divine agency to the human activities displayed in this peculiar process. It is not practicable here to describe the widely diversified theories which have been propounded in answer to this speculative query,—theories ranging from the most extreme dogma of literal or verbal or mechanical dictation, down through various gradations, to those rationalistic or naturalistic opinions which reduce inspiration nearly to the level of ordinary human experience. The Symbols cannot be said to present any distinct answer to this question: they are limited chiefly to an assertion of the fact that the Scriptures are, in some adequate and reliable way, *given by inspiration of God.* Mitchell justly says that the Westminster divines were at more special pains than the authors of any other Confession, . . . to leave open all reasonable questions as to the mode and degree of inspiration, which could consistently be left open by those who accepted the Scriptures as the infallible rule of faith and duty. In this they simply followed the

example of the Divine Word itself, which in various forms and with adequate authority affirms the fact of inspiration, but nowhere tells us how or in what methods or measures holy men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost when they spake or recorded what he theopneustically led them to reveal. There is in fact no clear evidence, at least in the Minutes, that the Assembly held tenaciously any specific or fixed theory on the subject. Dickson expresses what was probably the current view at the time in the statement, (Truth's Victory over Error) that by the Scripture or the Word of God we do not understand the bare letters or the several words, . . . which the adversaries may imagine are all the Word of God. But we do understand thereby the Doctrine or Will of God, revealed unto reasonable creatures, teaching them what to do, believe, or learn wisdom.

Yet it is quite obvious that the Symbols furnish suggestions which at least are sufficient to rule out certain defective notions, if not to lead us on to the true and full conception. For illustration, they do not justify the merely mechanical theory—the theory of verbal dictation—which regards the human instrumentality in the case as wholly passive,—the Holy Spirit using inspired men as if they were so many musical instruments, silent until touched by his finger, and giving forth literally and without conscious movement of their own each word or letter of the revelation he is imparting. It may be possible on such a theory still to recognize differences among the sacred writers, signs of separate personality and action among them, just as different instruments of music sound the same note or strain differently, Yet this theory fails to explain adequately those strong signs and movements of human as well as divine personality, which are almost everywhere apparent in Scripture; it fails also to furnish any explanation of differences or variations, at least verbal or formal, which all must in some sense recognize as existing in the written Word. No view of inspiration can explain such features, or meet all the essential tests in the case, which does not admit the existence of a free, vigorous, flowing and largely conscious human factor in the holy process. Hodge (Syst. Theol.) after illustrating the operations of the Spirit in inspiration by his operations in sanctification, adds the statement, that as the believer seems to himself to act, and in fact does act, out of his own nature, so the inspired penmen wrote out of the fullness of their own thoughts and feelings, and employed the language and modes of expresion which to them were the most natural and appropriate. It has well been said by another high authority, that the human is as really blended with

the divine in Scripture, as humanity is united with divinity in the person of Christ.

On the other hand, the Westminster teaching clearly rules out the antithetic opinion that inspiration relates merely to what are called the essentials, but not to the incidentals of Scripture; or that it concerns itself with spiritual concepts, but not with the language in which those concepts are set forth; or that mistakes and errors of various classes may creep into the record from the human side, with the consent of the superintending Spirit,—his agency not preserving the writers from inaccurate or erroneous statement on matters not vitally related to the main purpose of the revelation. The Symbols contain no suggestion of any recognizable distinction between the essential and the incidental, between the concept and the language; or of an inspiration which is but partial and variable, appearing and disappearing in the same composition, at one time strong enough to protect the writer against error, at another too weak to save him from those liabilities to inaccuracy to which human writers elsewhere are subject. They recognize the fact that imperfect experiences are recorded in the Scriptures, but never suggest that these experiences are imperfectly recorded. They also admit incomplete enunciations of doctrine, partial and progressing disclosures of truth and duty, verbal variations in statement and quotation, obscuration in language and teaching; but they none the less claim infallibility in the record as well as in the revelation, and an infallibility which is coextensive with the entire Scripture, and is seen in and through all apparent disagreements.

It is not at variance with this general doctrine to admit the fact that the relative manifestation, and even the proportionate activity of these two elements, varies in different parts of Scripture. The divine and the human work together, not always in one way, still less as if connected together mechanically, wheel within wheel, but rather in a large variety of ways and in various forms of connection;—as is true, for example, in the kindred work of regeneration. It is an old and familiar analysis which distributes the divine factor into three such varieties,—an agency of superintendence, illustrated in that controlling guidance which secures the accurate description of biographical or historical events,—an agency of suggestion and spiritual inbreathing, such as is seen in the teaching and temper of the Psalms, or of some among the apostolic Letters,—an agency of direct and immediate dictation, in which truths wholly unattainable by man and even impenetrable to him who utters them, such as the Mosaic code, the higher forms of prophecy, or the cardinal doctrines of grace, are disclosed to the

mind, and are transmitted by the recipient in the very words of God. But it is not to be understood that even in the lowest of these forms such divine agency is less real or effectual than in the highest, though the variety in mode and measure is obvious, and the distinctions resulting are in several aspects important. More of the human element may consequently be apparent in one portion than in another; things which are local or transient, or which are less vital in their bearings on salvation, may be more frequent or marked; the infirmities of man may even seem to break in at some points, as if to mar the perfection of the composite Word. But on the other hand, there are portions of Scripture where what is human seems to be awed into almost utter silence,—where the deep voice of God himself is heard in awful reverberations, and every word sounds as if it came directly from the Throne.

But however far such distinctions or grades in inspiration may be admitted, the Christian mind must ever hold that an infallible revelation requires in order to its acceptance and influence a record essentially infallible. If the divine disclosure is to be made in human language, such language must properly embody—so far as this is possible to human speech—the divine thought to be recorded. Nor can the Christian mind ever consent to regard the Bible as being a merely human account, more or less complete, more or less fallible, of certain divine communications once made. Sacred Scripture is never to be viewed as a natural transcript merely, even though it were an accurate transcript, of supernatural revelations once given historically to mankind. The Bible is something infinitely higher than a collection of religious books, a compilation of Hebrew literature, containing revelations from God, which have been preserved for the benefit of mankind. It is in the deepest sense his word, his message, his book throughout, and therefore an infallible rule for men. It may indeed be true, as has been strongly affirmed, that the supernatural quality and authority of the Scriptures could be maintained apart from any doctrine of inspiration, or of the entire infallibility of Scripture as resulting from inspiration. But on the other hand it must be maintained that inspiration includes the form as well as the contents of Scripture,—that the Bible is a divine construction as really, though by another process, as the physical universe,—and that this divine communication can have neither adequate authority nor saving influence, so long as men are in doubt respecting the accuracy of the records which report it. The difficulties evaded by any such line of reasoning are by no means so serious as those which it introduces. If the record be in any part of it merely human or fallible, we certainly

can have no adequate guarantee that the revelation there recorded is really from God. The mistakes of the writers in recording may be indices of mistakes much more vital in apprehending what was revealed; errors in incidental matters inevitably suggest the possibility of like error in the statement of what is most central and essential. In a word, the Bible must be something more, in form as well as in substance, than a transcript by fallible men in inaccurate language of a revelation once made on the earth: it must itself be that Revelation.

The current discussion whether the Bible is a revelation from God or only contains such a revelation, is very largely a dispute about words. The Symbols use both expressions. The Bible is the Word of God: Conf. I: iv–v, L. C. 157; the Word of God is contained in the Scriptures, S. C. 2,—evidently from the Irish Articles, 1, 6. Note the Thirty-Nine Articles, Holy Scripture containeth; First Helvetic, I, Scriptura canonica verbum Dei . . . sola perfecte continet; French Conf. V; Belgic Conf. VII. In one aspect the Bible contains the accurate historic record of a long series of specific revelations: in another, as being in its totality a supernatural communication from God to mankind, it may properly be said to be one Revelation. The former statement is objectionable only when it seems to imply that these specific revelations stand in an inexact and fallible setting,—that the historic record which contains them is not altogether faithful to fact. The general proposition must be that the Bible both contains revelations, and is throughout a Revelation. But whether contemplated in the one aspect or in the other, a real and efficient inspiration must be recognized in it, not only communicating supernatural and saving truth, but transmitting that truth in language wholly adequate and accurate—infallible, so far as the great purpose of the Revelation is in any way involved.

That the view here stated was the general doctrine of the Protestant churches may be ascertained by careful examination of their creeds, both continental and insular. The Augsburg Confession prefaces its Articles with the statement that its doctrines are derived from the Holy Scriptures and pure Word of God,—regarded as the infallible and ultimate test of all human opinion and belief. The Formula of Concord declares in the introduction to its confessional affirmations, that the only rule and norm according to which all dogmas and all doctors ought to be esteemed and judged, is none other whatever than the prophetic and apostolic writings of both the Old and New Testaments; this dignity as judge and rule, norm and touchstone, belonging to Holy Scripture

alone. The First Helvetic Confession affirms that the Scriptures, having been transmitted by the Holy Ghost and set forth to the world by prophets and apostles, alone contain perfectly the most ancient and most complete philosophy, and the supreme reason or ground of all life and all religion. In the French Confession it is said that God has revealed himself not only in his works but also in his Word, in the beginning made known through holy oracles, but afterwards committed to writing in the books which we call the Holy Scriptures. In like manner the Belgic Confession declares that this Word of God was not sent or delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and that these Scriptures so fully contain the will of God that whatsoever man ought to believe unto salvation is sufficiently taught therein. Similar declarations might be quoted from other continental formularies, and from the earlier British Confessions also. In view of such declarations, there can be no doubt that while the Protestantism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries set forth no specific theory of either revelation or inspiration, it held firmly to the doctrine taught by the Westminster Assembly, after its enumeration of the canonical Books: *All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.*

6. Inerrancy of Scripture: the Bible free from real error.

In accepting this general conception of an inspired, sufficient, and authoritative Revelation, as presented in the Symbols, and as thus certified more or less extensively in all antecedent Protestant symbolism, we may not claim that the doctrine is cleared from all difficulties. On one side there are deep mysteries enveloping this divine process which it is not given to man to solve—mysteries even deeper than those which conceal from us so largely the divine activities in the field of providence and in the general field of grace. On another side there are serious perplexities discernible by us, which must be duly considered as we study this recorded Revelation, and endeavor thoughtfully to comprehend its contents,—perplexities which group themselves chiefly around the very practical inquiry whether these Scriptures contain errors such as properly preclude their claim to be an infallible revelation.

Locke defines error in a subjective sense as a mistake of our own judgment, in giving assent to that which is not true. It should be added to his definition that error in certain spheres, and eminently in the sphere of religion, may spring from an ignorance that is willful, as Paul teaches, or from the action of wrong feeling, as well as from mistakes of the judgment. Objectively, an

error may be an unintentional falsity in statement made by another, growing out of his lack of adequate knowledge. If there be an intention to deceive or mislead, or even to leave the hearer in the dark as to the real fact, such objective error exhibits a moral quality, and he who leads others into false views or judgments in any such method is criminal. In the case before us we cannot suppose that the Holy Spirit was himself ignorant respecting the truth which he professed to reveal, or that he fell through oversight or accident into inaccuracies of whatever sort, or in any manner conveyed erroneous impressions unintentionally. Still less can we suppose that he intended to mislead or deceive or to leave men in the dark respecting the spiritual truth which he was professing to disclose. In any of these senses error can not be affirmed of the Scriptures: if they are in truth inspired by the Holy Ghost, this degree of inerrancy must be one of their cardinal qualities.

This hypothetical view is strongly sustained by several presumptions. For example, if God truly desires to make a revelation to men concerning things needful to their salvation, it is certainly to be expected that, however such revelation may be limited in scope by the end in view, or in form by the mental and moral condition of its recipients, there will be nothing in it that would deceive or mislead, or would leave such recipients in the dark as to even its minuter contents. Again: the great end in view in such divine disclosure, which is nothing less than human salvation, certainly justifies the anticipation that not only the truths presented, but also the very language used in expressing them shall be free from all error in itself, and even from all obscurity or inaccuracy such as would tend to lead the reader astray or to bring the soul into peril. Again: it may reasonably be presumed that if such a revelation, designed to meet such a vital end, shall be given to the world through human agency, the men selected for such service would be distinguished from all other men by being lifted supernaturally above exposures to inaccuracy and errancy such as are apparent in ordinary human experience. And moreover, if the Holy Spirit be truly present in and through their execution of the divine purpose—superintending, animating, inspiring—it is a just expectation that he will not suffer anything to enter into such a record which would in any degree impair its value as a faithful and reliable statement of the truth,—exactly as God desires such truth to be known and diffused among men. Such suggestions—to speak of no others—make it evident that the hypothesis of inerrancy is not an a priori affirmation merely, but

rather justifies itself as not only probable, but reasonable and even conclusive.

But we are called at this point to contemplate, not an ideal inerrancy which may on such grounds be justly presumed to have been an essential quality of the inspired Word, as it came originally from God through the agency of the infallible Spirit, but rather the practical question, whether that inspired Word as we now have it, after many centuries of time, is to be received and cherished by us as truly inerrant—infallible. The noted ecclesiastical deliverance that the Scripture as it came from God is without error, is intelligible only on the hypothesis that Scripture is now exactly what it was at the beginning—a hypothesis which is controverted by some unquestionable facts. And if, moreover, it were ascertained that there are actual errors, properly so called, in the Bible as we now have it, the speculative question whether such errors were in this Holy Book as it first came from God—serious as it is—would be of small import in comparison with the more immediate question whether, in case such errors are really discoverable in it now, we may still rest upon it as a veritable message from the Deity to mankind. There are no traces of debate upon this question in the Westminster Assembly, nor is it probable that the hypothesis of errancy found advocates of any prominence on British soil prior to the rise of English Deism in the succeeding century. Since that period this destructive hypothesis has been often and earnestly urged, and is still a center of strenuous and anxious discussion.

The term, errancy, as employed in such discussion, at least among Christian scholars, relates not to any essential teachings of Scripture respecting either doctrine or duty, but only to what may be denoted as its circumstantial or incidental features. So far as the great truths, the binding precepts, the glorious promises, the supreme elements in the scheme of salvation are concerned, all Christian minds are agreed that the Bible as we now possess it, is an absolutely inerrant book; all unite in receiving it as being as truly the very utterance and message of God now as it was when it came forth in its perfection from his gracious hand. Yet we must admit that we find in this divine book, as we now have it, partial or incomplete statements, variant reports of the same acts or sayings, differing citations of the same passages, circumstantial diversities in the records of the same events, apparent discrepancies in various incidental matters which, taken in the aggregate, seem to furnish considerable warrant for the allegation of errancy. But here it should be noted at once that the number

of these alleged errancies is found on critical examination to be much smaller than has sometimes been claimed, and is diminishing rather than increasing,—that many of these are based on a specific theory of inspiration, specially that of verbal dictation, but fade away in the light of a more philosophic and practical conception of the theopneustic process,—that many exist only in the erroneous apprehension or inaccurate exegesis of those who urge them,—and generally, that in fact much more has been made of such asserted errancies than the actual material in hand justifies. It should also be noted that the use of such an abstract or generic term as errancy is seriously misleading and erroneous, inasmuch as it seems to imply that such errancy is a pervading characteristic of the Scriptures, or to suggest that, while the Bible is reliable in its expositions of truth and duty, it is extensively unreliable in its historic and circumstantial portions. Those who have affirmed that Holy Writ is in these particulars marked by error or even incidental errancy, have not always realized the depth of the shadows which their affirmations throw upon its credibility and authoritativeness throughout. For although this Divine Book is neither history nor biography in the main, still if its historical or biographic statements were found to be in frequent conflict with each other or with facts obtained from other reliable sources,—if variation, difference, diversity, discrepancy, contradiction were discernible on close investigation as a general characteristic of its records, very serious doubt would inevitably be cast upon its instructions and counsels within its own particular field,—the field of religious truth and religious obligation.

In studying the Scriptures as we now find them, with a view to determining the exact amount and nature of the errancy alleged, it is incumbent upon us, first of all, to make due account of the long process of transcription and transmission through which the sacred Books have passed—a process running on through many centuries, in different countries and conditions, conducted by thousands of copyists, each one of whom was liable to mistake, and many of whom might venture to attempt correction here or there in the original text. A multitude of such mistakes and fancied emendations have already been discovered by Christian scholars; others may even yet appear as new sources come to light; and if the original text were in our hands, some changes might be detected which are not discernible at this stage. It is indeed quite probable that much of the supposed discordance in the historical books of the Old Testament, in the biographies of Christ, and the records of the labors and career of Paul, embarrasses us only

because we are not in possession of the unaltered records. But as the case now stands, we have large room for rejoicing in the significant fact that the alleged errancies of whatever class, thus far discovered and verified, are not found to affect seriously the teaching of Scripture in any matter of doctrine or of duty. It is almost equally significant and gratifying to discover that none of these circumstantial diversities are of sufficient moment to cast any disastrous shadow on the essential truthfulness of either the biographies or the histories involved. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that, if we were in possession of the original records, a very large proportion of what is now regarded as errancy would wholly disappear.

It is incumbent upon us, in the second place, to remember that some things in the Scriptures have become so obscured through centuries of time and changes that full explanation of them has now come to be impracticable. Many illustrations of such obscuration may be gathered up from the Gospels, from the epistolary writings and from the Apocalypse; still others appear in the prophetic and historical portions of the Old Testament, And some of these, which doubtless were entirely plain in the distant ages in which the sacred books were written, seem to us mysterious, or even discrepant, simply because we are not in possession of the local data and conditions which determined their form or their substance. If we take into account the wide peculiarities in thought, experience, custom prevailing in those oriental lands where the Bible was written,—the special characteristics of the languages and dialects employed in their composition, and the unique design and quality of the sacred writings,—the vast transformations of every type which so many revolutions and developments have wrought in human society since the scroll of Revelation was closed,—the concealing dimness that has fallen like dust on so much of ancient civilization everywhere, we may easily infer that at least some things which at this distance seem to us like inaccuracies or contradictions, would change into beautiful harmonies, provided we could only see the facts and events just as the sacred writers saw them. The marvel indeed is that the Book is so well understood, its apparent discrepancies are so largely explained, its grand disclosures so intelligently apprehended, notwithstanding such chronologic obscurations. It might even be claimed as one mark of its true divinity that it has survived so remarkably all such mutations, and is still in all that is essential to it as a guide to religion and salvation, so fully comprehensible not merely in the places where it originated but throughout the earth and throughout the ages.

Eliminating whatever is properly traceable to faulty transcription or interpolation, or to the obscuration of time, it is still further incumbent upon us to employ all the available principles of sound and considerate exegesis in testing whatever of alleged error remains in the sacred text. Misleading parallelisms, for example, are to be avoided; variations arising from differing degrees of prominence or emphasis merely are to be set aside; differences in narrating various parts of the same event are not to be pronounced contradictory; varieties of view and statement springing simply from the distinguishing characteristics of the inspired narrators, are not to be regarded as discrepancies. It cannot be denied that the citations quoted with greater or less exactness or with substantial accuracy merely, should not be treated as cases of errancy; the absence of logical or rhetorical precision or of grammatical correctness should not be viewed as impugning the infallibility of the record; scientific statements, or exact harmony with scientific facts, are not to be demanded in such a book as the Bible. It is not necessary, says Bishop Burnet, (Thirty-Nine Articles) where discourses are reported, that the individual words should be set down just as they were said; it is enough if the effect of them is reported. Nor is it necessary that the order of time should be strictly observed, or that all the conjunctions in such relation should be understood merely according to their grammatical meaning . . . . The design of revelation, as to this part of the subject —he adds—is only to give such representations of matters of fact as may both work upon and guide our belief; but the order of time and the strict words having no influence that way, the writers might dispose them and express them variously, and yet all be exactly true. Failure to apply such just exegetical rules, in the temper of honest loyalty to the divine Word, accounts for very much of the current allegations of errancy. Still it may be necessary, after all such explanatory processes, to admit that there may remain in the Scriptures as we now possess them what has been well described, (Hodge, Syst. Theol.) as here or there a speck of sand-stone showing itself in the marble of the Parthenon—an occasional variation, difference or even discrepancy of statement which, so far as we can see, may have been in the original text as written by holy men moved by the Holy Ghost. Yet the same revered authority regards it as a most impressive, even awful fact, that these Scriptures have been so miraculously kept free from the soiling touch of human fingers, and maintains that any such instances of errancy would not in the least subvert the doctrine of a truly plenary inspiration.

As a result of the most careful examination we discern in the Bible, notwithstanding such possible blemish, a thoroughly inspired, a truly theopneustic Book, containing both a series of genuine and precious revelations all bearing on the supreme problem of human salvation, and a large series of facts and events which are of transcendent interest in view of their vital relationship to such revelations. We have all these recorded accurately, and without anything that can properly be called error, by the hands of men who were moved for this purpose by the Holy Ghost, and who—while each one wrote, in the phrase of Augustine, as he remembered it or had it in his heart, *ut cuique cordi erat*—were each and all so moved and guided as to be free from the liabilities consequent upon human ignorance or incapacity, and free also from those incentives to deceive or mislead by which other writers are sometimes influenced. We discern the human factor everywhere present, though under considerable variety of aspect, for the most part if not always conscious, and always so acting that the personality, experience, characteristic qualities, style, and limitations also, of each writer are seen to be determining in large degree the form and even the contents of the inspired communication. Yet we everywhere discover the divine factor dominating in this peculiar process, guiding in the language and form as well as in the truth expressed, guarding against everything that could properly be called erroneous,—the divine agent dynamically manifesting his presence at every point, yet in such manner as to leave the human agents free in uttering the recorded truth in forms and terms best suited to themselves. In the Holy Book thus prepared, as we now have it, we may find an occasional trace of what is described as errancy —an occasional instance of verbal inexactness, or circumstantial variation, or deficiency or even discrepancy in statement which we may partly but at this distance of time cannot altogether explain, and which may in part have been even in the original manuscripts. Yet we may also note the fact that the Bible as we now rejoice to possess it, is found on thorough and correct examination to contain no error or blemish which impairs any doctrine, lessens our sense of any duty, or in any way effects unfavorably the great issue of salvation. We may therefore rest with confidence in the strong and just statement embodied in the proposed revision of the Confession of Faith :

The Holy Spirit who of old revealed to men in various ways the mind and will of God, hath fully and authoritatively made known this mind and will in all things pertaining to life and

salvation in the sacred Scriptures, holy men of God speaking therein as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and these Scriptures, being so inspired, are the infallible word of God, the supreme standard of faith and duty.

In conjunction with this specific conception of a positive Revelation made to particular men and written by the hand of inspiration, we may at this point note with advantage the more generic conception of Revelation as a process historically carried forward in the moral experience of humanity, and made manifest through a wide variety of agencies. Some interesting confirmations of this broader conception appear in the phraseology of the Symbols. While God on one hand has revealed his will specifically to certain chosen instruments, and has guided them in recording that will accurately for the benefit of mankind, so that we have as the result a veritable and sufficient Revelation, registered in adequate and accurate language, He is also described as conducting age by age a corresponding process of revealment in the mind and conscience of the race. He discloses himself to the world in a succession of acts as well as in words: He makes his presence, his authority, his truth, his grace immediately manifest in the revealing light of nature, and through the works of creation and providence. He also works out historically in the souls of men spiritual results which are revelations no less real or significant in their degree than the written Scripture itself. In this generic as well as in the more specific sense, *it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself.* This cosmic revealment commenced centuries before the inspired record began to be made. It was illustrated in the giving of the Messianic promises, in the divine dealing with the patriarchs, in the earlier experiences of the nascent church, in the development and growth of piety in the hearts of his people, long before the Holy Spirit had begun to record such processes by the pen of inspiration. Nor is it true that God has put on record the whole of this antecedent, historic procedure of grace. Only so much of it as was calculated to be of permanent service to the race, was thus transcribed by inspired hands. In other words, the written Revelation follows the historic revelation, and is its enduring transcript and representative,—the gracious Word faithfully preserving and declaring the gracious works of God. *Afterwards*, it is said, and *for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church*, the disclosures first made directly to men in sundry times and divers manners, were committed unto writing,—inspiration

7. Revelation Historic and Written: Written Revelation progressive and final.

taking up the story of grace, and repeating it in written form for the benefit of humanity in all succeeding ages.

And as this grand historic revelation was progressive, exhibiting itself at various periods and in various forms, so the written Revelation which describes it, is in its nature progressive,—carried on through a series of stages and methods, until it reaches its final culmination. There is a beautiful and an impressive evolution of truth and of precept and obligation in the Bible — an orderly unfolding of doctrine and duty, like the unrolling of some splendid scroll,— which is enough of itself to show that a Divine Mind has been present throughout the transcendent process. The being and will and grace of God come out, in this divine record, in ever increasing luminousness and beauty, just as they had already done in the experience and career of his chosen people. A proper appreciation of this fact is essential to any adequate understanding of the forms and varieties under which this Divine Word exists — to any true view of its divisions, methods, authors, teachings. The historical books, with their biographic concomitants, may be regarded as the main thread on which the whole is arranged: these carry with them the successive disclosures of sin and of character, and the growing series of symbols and promises preparatory to the Advent. In the person and work of the Immanuel all the past is gathered up, and from him the apostolic growths and advances in turn receive their explanation. Christ is the luminous center of the whole; and every section, every statement of fact from Genesis to Revelation, is set in its proper position with reference to its bearings on Him and his supreme mission. More than any other book, the Bible thus reveals a vast, comprehensive, definite plan, both in its interior organization and in its historic evolution. However diversified in its contents, however multiform in language or authorship, time or place, it is thus profoundly, indissolubly one Revelation. Nor is it permissible to say that anything in it, even its list of things that were not to be eaten, or its genealogical registrations, are of no significance to us, since each minutest feature or event is there recorded because it is divinely regarded as an essential element or factor in the composite structure. Each stage in the remarkable unfolding is joined on vitally both with all preceding and with all subsequent stages. The progress seen in every part is progress toward a definite consummation; and when this consummation is reached, the product is found to be divinely complete and perfect.

This Revelation is therefore final as well as progressive: it is

decisively affirmed that *these former ways* of revealing the will of God *are now ceased*. The whole counsel of God is said to be *expressly laid down in Scripture*, or to be ascertained by proper application of principles set forth in Scripture. Hence we are told that nothing is at any time to be added to this Divine Word; no new discoveries of truth, whether imparted by the Spirit, or obtained from any other source, are to be co-ordinated with the Bible. The work of the Spirit both in revelation and in inspiration is viewed as finished and complete. He graciously illuminates, teaches, educates, edifies, but he no longer reveals — he no longer inspires. All assumption of prophetic functions or of apostolic authority is hereby condemned: false communications claiming divine warrant are cast out: even the inner light of faith, contemplated as supplying to the believer any further or higher knowledge than that here contained, is set aside. The Word thus given is put forth as the only, the universal and perpetual, rule alike of faith and of obedience,— to which therefore it is the imperative duty of all men to give credence, instant and entire.— On the subject of fidelity to this finished and perfect Word, especially as in contrast with the commandments and traditions of men, or the dicta of churches, more will be said at a later stage. The finality of this one and only Revelation is all that needs to be asserted here.

8. Contents of Scripture: particular books; The Canon.

Passing from this study of the nature and scope of Revelation to the second general topic, the contents of Scripture, we may first observe the authoritative enumeration of the particular books which are said to be included in this one and only Revelation. The Westminster Confession, like some other Protestant symbols, simply accepts the Canon of Scripture as it stood at the time, with the exception of the Apocrypha whose secondary canonicity it decisively rejects. We have no evidence that the subject was formally considered in the Assembly; and it may be inferred that no serious diversity of opinion existed. It is a suggestive fact that the Lutheran symbols contain no list of the canonical books, and pronounce no decision against the Apocrypha. This fact may be traceable in part to the prevalent impression that the apocryphal writings had, as the papacy affirmed, some measure of secondary authority; and partly to the doubts of Erasmus and Luther, and probably others, with respect to the canonicity of certain portions of the received Scriptures. The absence of any such list, though such an eminent authority as Dorner regards it as an excellence, is certainly a

serious defect. Had Lutheranism from the first affirmed the proper canonicity of each and all of the books generally received by Protestantism as rightfully classed among the Holy Scriptures, much of the heretical tendency in biblical criticism current during this century in Germany would have at least received a salutary check. Two of the Reformed creeds, the French Confession of 1559 and the Belgic Confession, 1561, contain a list of the canonical books; and the same list is found in the Thirty-Nine Articles, and in the Irish Articles. From the latter it was evidently transcribed, together with most of the contents of the chapter, *Of the Holy Scripture*, into the creed of Westminster. All of these symbols agree in accepting the Canon as it was progressively made up by the early church, and at last authoritatively affirmed by the Council of Hippo, 393, and by the Council of Carthage, 397. These Councils, however, following the general usage of the early Church, and acting under the influence of Augustine, regarded the Apocrypha as having a secondary species of canonicity.

The general question respecting the formation of the Canon, was not discussed in the Assembly, and can be considered but incidentially in this connection. Defining the term as descriptive, not of the sacred literature of the Jews in general, or of books more or less employed in instruction or worship, but only of such writings as came from God through certified inspiration, and were collected together as the divinely prescribed rule of belief and duty, the Canon of the Old Testament must be viewed as a growth, following somewhat closely upon the precedent growth of revelation itself. We are justified by both the Old and the New Testament in believing that the several books of the Law were thus brought together at an early period, and regarded from the first as having peculiar divine warrant. The structure of the Pentateuch has recently been a matter of earnest discussion. The existence of antecedent documents from which Moses derived in part the material for his narrative, is now freely admitted as probable. The fact that some additions, both historical and prophetic, were made after his death, is also generally recognized. The opinion that the final compilation, especially of the three Codes, was made in part by others after his death, but within a comparatively brief period, has distinct evidences in its favor. But the theory which postpones some books of the Pentateuch to a period many centuries subsequent to Moses,—which regards the Law as a development running on traditionally down through the theocratic and the royal era, and at last finding written

expression during the era of the prophets, rests on inadequate grounds, and is questionable if not destructive in tendency. That Moses was essentially the author of this division of Scripture, as he was the chief human agent in the history there recorded, seems to be established alike by many internal evidences and by the general witness of Scripture. The historical books were also preserved and grouped together in like manner, as containing a divinely authenticated record of both the national and the religious life of the chosen people. Collections of psalms and proverbs, probably for purposes of worship primarily, were also made at an early day. The Book of Psalms, as we now have it, is unquestionably a final compilation of such antecedent collections, though the theory that its contents were written not by David or his contemporaries or immediate successors, but at a much later period in Jewish history, and chiefly after the Exile, must be regarded as at least doubtful. Jewish tradition, which has a high degree of probability in its favor, assigns the final aggregation of this inspired material into one book to the age of Ezra, and specifically to the period of the rebuilding of the temple: B. C. 457. From and after this period, it is certain that the Old Testament existed substantially under its present form and arrangement, presenting in its unity the divine teaching respecting what man ought to believe, and what duty God requires, so far as the Jewish people were concerned. As such it was confirmed in its totality by frequent references, and in its separate divisions by numerous quotations and allusions made by our Lord and by his apostles. As such, it was received by the early church universally; was translated into the Septuagint, was quoted by the Fathers, both Greek and Latin, as authoritative in each and all of its main divisions; and by steadily increasing assent became the accepted revelation of truth and duty for those, whether Jew or Gentile, who wore the Christian name.

A like principle of growth or aggregation is apparent in the formation of the New Testament Canon. For nearly two centuries the books comprised in it existed separately, or in collections which were but partial and provincial. During the third and fourth centuries the process of separating the inspired writings from all affiliated productions went on,—the earlier traditions in their favor being tested progressively by critical inquiry, until at length the judgment of the Church was fully formed, and an authoritative decision was reached. During this long process, books assuming to be sacred if not inspired were examined and rejected; others which were less generally known, or in regard to which

partial doubt existed at first, made their way into the sacred list; the conception of inspiration was more fully defined, and the theoretical standard or test of inspiration raised; copies of the aggregated volume were multiplied, and less complete collections were set aside, until at length entire agreement was attained, and the New Testament took its place by the side of the Old, as constituting together with it the one sole and perpetual Word of God.

The problem of canonicity is in one sense a problem always open,—a problem which no section of the church in any given period can solve authoritatively for all other sections through all time. It is conceivable that evidences might manifest themselves which would compel the exclusion of some book now regarded as canonical; and on the other hand it is conceivable that some new writing may be discovered even at this late day, which the judgment of the church would place among the inspired and authoritive Scriptures. Yet these possibilities are possibilities only. A very strong presumption certainly exists in favor of decisions reached fifteen centuries ago,and which have stood the tests and scrutiny of the church universal down to our own time. Questions have indeed been and still are raised by Christian scholarship as well as by deistic unbelief, respecting certain books in the New and also in the Old Testament, and all such questions have within just limits some claim to candid consideration. Yet the fact that since the fifth century no book then admitted to the sacred Canon has subsequently been rejected by any section of the church, Catholic or Protestant, seems well-nigh to settle the problem for all coming time. The decisive probability is that the Bible as we have it, will be the Bible of the Christian Church so long as the Church exists.

9. Apocryphal Books: Their position and claim; Reasons for rejection.

Before proceeding to consider the principles which underlie this general process of construction, we should note the corresponding process of elimination, as illustrated in the estimation and treatment of the apocryphal writings. So far as any such writings were at any time associated with the New Testament or appended to it, the question is comparatively unimportant. These writings are in no case older than the second, and many of them belong to the third or possibly the fourth century. Their authorship is either uncertain or unknown; their contents are largely trivial and fictitious, and their spirit and tone fall entirely below those of the Gospels and the apostolic Letters. To this should be added the fact that they have never had currency or credence as inspired in any division of the church,

Protestant or Catholic. The apocryphal writings belonging to the Old Testament period, though possessing largely the same characteristics, have occasioned more frequent discussion, and given rise to wider ecclesiastical diversities. Though they never had place in the Hebrew Canon, as was generally admitted, yet they seem to have passed gradually during the first three Christian centuries into the list of sacred if not inspired writings; and as such were appointed to be read, if not for the purpose of proving from them any divine doctrine, still for instruction and edification. In the first catalogue of authoritative Scriptures, drawn up by any representative body in the Church, the Council of Laodicea, some of these books were directly named as canonical; and in the writings of Augustine and other Fathers they were recognized as in some tributary sense parts of Holy Scripture. The distinction just suggested, though urged by Origen and Jerome, hardly represented the general conviction. These writings were not only judged to be useful as illustrative of inspired Scripture; they were also regarded widely as having a species of secondary canonicity, and were sometimes accepted even as integral portions of the true Revelation. Writers of the Middle Ages generally so describe and treat them; and down to the period of the Reformation, they were both used in worship and quoted doctrinally—especially in support of certain papal errors, such as the dogma of Purgatory.

The Council of Trent, following Augustine and the early Church, pronounced the apocryphal books in all their parts, as they have been accustomed to be read in the Catholic church, and are found in the ancient editions of the Latin Vulgate, sacred and canonical; and anathematized all who should refuse so to receive them. The Council also confirmed its decree by declaring further that the Vulgate, which by the lengthened use of so many ages, as they said, has been approved of by the church, should be regarded and used as the only authoritative translation of the Scriptures. Some Catholic writers have justified the distinction between primary and secondary canonicity, and have regarded the apocryphal books as canonical in the secondary sense only—useful rather than authoritative. But the decision of Trent makes these writings fully authoritative,—although since the exaltation of tradition to a place of co-ordinate authority with Scripture, and especially since the enunciation of the dogma of papal infallibility, the doctrinal necessity for such a decision hardly seems urgent.

The Protestant churches were led by doctrinal as well as historical and exegetical considerations to array themselves against the Roman position. It is urged by Moehler as a criticism (Symbolism)

that in their decision of the question, regard was had to other considerations than those of a merely historical and critical kind. He probably refers to those doctrinal predilections and those personal impulses by which Luther was led to reject the Epistle of James, and to question the comparative worth of other portions of the canonical Scriptures which did not harmonize, as he supposed, with the Pauline conception of justification. But Calvin was equally emphatic with Luther in setting the Apocrypha aside as unauthoritative, basing his judgment on the specific ground of the absence in them of the proper signs of inspiration. The Belgic Confession in the same interest declared that the canonical books are to be received, not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in our hearts that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves. But with reference to the apocryphal writings the same Confession expresses the general sentiment of continental Protestantism in the words: All which the church may read and take instruction from, so far as they agree with the canonical books; but they are far from having such power and efficacy as that we may from their testimony confirm any point of faith or of the Christian religion—much less to detract from the authority of the older sacred books. In the Thirty-Nine Articles the same view (VI) is presented: The other books, as Hierome saith, the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply to them to establish any doctrine. This is also the teaching of the Irish Articles, with the added declaration (3) that these writings did not proceed from inspiration. In the Westminster Confession we have a still more decisive rejection; it being affirmed not only that these books are *not of inspiration*, and are *no part of the canon* of the Scripture, but also that they are of *no authority* in the Church of God, and are *not to be any otherwise approved or made use of than any other human writings*. Here the Reformed view comes into most marked and complete contrast with the decree of Trent; canonicity, even in the most secondary sense, is expressly denied; the use of the Apocrypha, even for example of life and instruction in manners, is practically disapproved.

The grounds of this strong judgment are not given, but the judgment itself stands out in marked opposition to the general opinion of the ancient Church and to the teaching of Rome. Its foundation and reason lie doubtless in the words of the Confession: *not being of divine inspiration*. The evidences of the absence of such inspiration here are antithetic to the evidences of the

presence of inspiration in the canonical Scriptures. That these writings make no claim to inspiration,—that we have no evidence of their having been regarded or received as inspired by the apostolic Church,—that the inspired books do not invest them with such endorsement as they clearly give to each other,—that they had no place in the Old Testament canon, and were never prized as inspired by the Hebrews,—and in addition, that they teach no important doctrine, and impart no special stimulus to faith, while on the other hand they contain much that is contrary to both the teaching and spirit of the received canonical books;—these in general were doubtless the grounds on which these writings were not only set aside, but practically condemned by the Assembly.

10. Tests of Canonicity: False and true tests indicated: value of the external tests.

The general principles by which the problem of canonicity is determined, are easily discerned. The Roman church, in harmony with its theory of the permanent indwelling and inworking of the Spirit within that church, may consistently maintain that its decision in the case is final: whatever the church affirms to be canonical, is so even if the Apocrypha be included in the affirmation. But Protestantism tests the church by the Scriptures, rather than the Scriptures by the verdict of the church; and therefore, in theory at least, maintains the opposite view, that the true test of any book found among the Sacred Writings is nothing less than the presence of inspired and authoritative revelation. In the statement and application of this principle, however, wide variety of practice has existed and still exists among the Protestant churches. It is the peculiar glory of the Westminster Symbols that they apply the principle so clearly and so rigidly, and while rejecting the apocryphal writings, do so earnestly approve and receive the books of our Canon on the ground of their demonstrated inspiration only. They aver that the authority of these inspired books *dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church*, but wholly upon God: and that the Bible, as made up, *is to be received because it is the Word of God.* This position stands in irreconcilable contrast with the Roman view, even if we state that view in its mildest form as maintaining, not indeed the right of the church to make any book canonical which had never before been so regarded, but simply its right to express a conclusive judgment on the claim of any book already within the Canon from ancient times.

It may justly be questioned, however, whether the Symbols do not follow the Belgic and other continental Confessions in making the test of canonicity too extensively, if not exclusively,

an internal test. While they teach that we may be *moved and induced by the testimony of the church to an high and reverent esteem*, they lay the main stress on the inward witness, derived from what the Scriptures are found to be interiorly, and from the effects which they produce in the believing soul. The French Conf. for example, strongly illustrates this tendency in the declaration (IV) that we know these books to be canonical, not so much by the common accord and consent of the church, as by the testimony and inward illumination of the Holy Spirit, which enables us to distinguish them from other ecclesiastical books,—upon which, however useful, we cannot found any articles of faith; see Scotch Conf., XIX. Nothing can be more exquisite than the reference in the Symbols (I : v) to the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole, (which is to give all glory to God) the full discovery of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof. Yet it may justly be doubted whether all these, though they be so many precious disclosures and confirmations to the soul that already believes in the Bible, are *arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself* to the unbelieving world to be the Word of God. Even the *inward work* of the Spirit, *bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts*, is not to be taken as decisive of the point of canonicity: that inward work itself needs external, historical, rational foundation such as a duly authenticated Revelation alone can give it.

The question is clearly to be decided primarily on external, even more than on internal grounds and evidences. The necessity for such external testimony is obvious. Though the O. T. Canon was made up by Ezra, as reliable tradition affirms, we have no adequate warrant for asserting that Ezra was inspired or infallibly guided in his holy task, on the internal ground that the books of the Old Test. commend themselves to our religious taste or feeling. We are also bound to search diligently for all outward indications in Jewish history and elsewhere, which may serve to justify or strengthen our inward confidence in their canonicity. Though the early Church has by progressive inquiry and by solemn acts of councils declared its judgment respecting the N. T. Canon, that conclusion is binding only so far as the reasons on which it is based, are in themselves clear and conclusive to us. Though the church of Rome proclaims its final decree, assuming to act as the divinely appointed arbiter in the case, and pronouncing its anathema on all who refuse to accept its decision,

the question is still open to the adjudication of Christian scholarship, and a different answer may be given at any time, if adequate external or historical warrant should be found. As Protestants following in the path of Luther and Calvin, and especially as Presbyterians, accepting the principles of our own Confession and the example of the divines of Westminster, we assuredly can take no other position than this. The fact that the Symbols have declared what books are canonical and what are apocryphal, does not prohibit any one from inquiring into the subject for himself, or from holding a different opinion, if on grounds which seem to him adequate and convincing, he is led to such result. The right of investigation, as has been already intimated, is one which the testimony of the church, however earnest and impressive, can never take away.

The external evidences of the true inspiration of the received Scripture, and of the proper canonicity of its several parts, cannot be presented in detail in this Lecture. They are found partly in miracles, viewed as proofs of a supernatural presence, working within the sphere of nature to secure certain moral or gracious results, and verified as historical facts on purely historical grounds. They are found partly in prophecies, regarded as predictions of events hereafter to occur in the field of providence, and afterward confirmed by facts authentically established. They are also found in the career and position of the Bible in the world, and in the marvelous influence of the Book as we now possess it, on the life and character of mankind wherever it has been produced. Volumes upon volumes have been written by the ablest Christian apologists in the elucidation of these external evidences, and in the exposition of their weight and conclusiveness whenever candidly apprehended. The point to be specially noted here is that these proofs present themselves in forms which skeptical minds can comprehend: they base the claim of the Bible to acceptance on grounds which skepticism can neither set aside nor controvert. They furnish in their combination a broad external argument for the Word of God,—an argument by which the judgment and conviction of humanity are first reached, and first won over to its acceptation. And on the firm basis which they supply, the inward witness of Scripture comes in as an additional confirmation, certifying afresh to the believing soul that the Bible as we have it in the canonical books is verily the word not of man, but of God.

In the Revision proposed for our own Church the words, *the truthfulness of the history, the faithful witness of prophecy and*

miracle, were added to the section on the evidences of Scripture as prefatory to the internal proofs there named, for the purpose of bringing out more distinctly this external argument for both the canonicity and the authoritativeness of the Divine Word. It is a fact worthy of note that the Westminster Assembly at one stage in the discussions on this subject adopted *the fullfilling of the prophecies* as one of the practical evidences in the case. It is also notable that Gillespie, to whom the construction of the Article seems to have been largely due, proposed also the phrases, *the irresistible power over the conscience, the supernatural mysteries revealed therein*,—referring doubtless to the moral effect of the Bible in human life, and to the confirmatory testimony of miracles in its support. The external proofs thus suggested have assumed vastly greater importance since prophecy and miracle, especially the latter, have become the subjects of so much thoughtful and valuable discussion, and since the argument from history and from the moral influence of Scripture has come to be valued at its proper worth. In view of such developments it is no longer desirable or wise to rest the claim of the Bible on internal evidence only. These more external attestations, whose appeal to the reason and the conscience is so potent, have become indispensable elements in the vast argument by which the world is to be persuaded into allegiance to spiritual Christianity. It is therefore a matter of regret that the proposed addition failed to gain its proper place in the Confession through the endorsement of a living church, which beyond a doubt accepts the truth which that addition was designed to express.

11. Preservation, genuineness, translation, and diffusion.

The statements of the Confession respecting the original form of these canonical writings, their providential preservation, and the right and duty of translation into the various languages of men, should be considered here. Referring to the Old Testament as written in the Hebrew, *which was the native language of the people of God of old*, and to the New Testament as written in the Greek, which at the time of writing was the *tongue most generally known to the nations*, it points to the *singular care and providence of God* by which these sacred books have been *kept pure in all ages;* preserved to be the light and guide not merely of those familiar with these languages but of all nations. If God doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions and things, from the greatest even to the least—as the Confession teaches elsewhere—it may certainly be held that such wise and holy providence would reveal

itself in an especial manner, not indeed miraculously or supernaturally, yet specifically and immediately, in the preservation of such a book as the Bible. And the history of that Book, of the vicissitudes through which it passed in its original form, of the perils to which it has been exposed from various quarters, of the means and agencies employed in its continuous preservation, and of the verifications historically furnished even to its minutest details, might without irreverence be called miraculous. That history is certainly a remarkable confirmation of its inherent claim to be the Word of God. Through comparison of many early manuscripts, through incidental references in early writings, Christian and pagan, through early translations extending back even to the first centuries, and in many other ways, we are enabled to verify the singular care and providence here asserted, and to recognize in the present Scriptures the genuine and veritable Word of God as given first to the Hebraic, then to the Christian Church.

It should be said here that the terms, genuine and authentic, as applied to any portion of Scripture, refer simply to its historic quality,—to the fact that it can be traced back satisfactorily, as to text and substance, to the sources from which it professes to have originated. The term, canonical, refers rather, as we have seen, to church opinions and decisions respecting the right of any such book, when proved to be genuine and authentic, to be placed in the group of inspired writings. A genuine and authentic book is one which was in fact written by the person who professes to write it, and is handed down to us exactly or substantially as he wrote it. A canonical book is one whose claims to a place in the grouped Scriptures are justified by adequate testimony, and confirmed by the judgment of the Christian Church on the basis of its established authenticity. Our Symbols affirm the verified genuineness of the several parts of the Bible, on the ground of the singular providence and care of God, as concerned with their historic preservation and integrity. They assert in general that each of the books named is to be viewed as authentic,—leaving to the investigation of textual critics all specific questions involving particular passages or individual terms or phrases in the authenticated Word.

Mitchell (Introduction) justly observes that, so far from desiring to go beyond their predecessors in rigor, the Westminster divines were at more special pains than the authors of any other Confession . . . to avoid mixing up the question of the canonicity of particular books with the question of their authorship,

where any doubt at all existed on the latter point. Yet there are many indications that they regarded the question of authorship, and especially of apostolic authorship, as one of very grave, if not vital importance. Especially in their long debates on the nature of the church, the authority of church officials, and the right and duty of church discipline, we hear them again and again appealing to apostolic authority as derived from the sacred writings. One of the cardinal elements in their firm belief that the New Testament books named in the Confession were truly canonical and inspired, and therefore in the highest sense authoritative, was the accepted fact that they were written by Matthew and John, Paul and Peter, and by other inspired persons under apostolic direction. In other words, they accepted these books as inspired and authoritative largely on the ground of their established apostolicity. Had they been confronted with that current type of naturalizing criticism which questions or denies this apostolic quality, and affirms that the Apostles wrote or indited but little, if any, of these Scriptures,—that the real authors were various unknown men, writing we know not when or where or from what motive, and finally passing off their productions upon the church by prefacing them with apostolic names,—they would have pronounced such an hypothesis not only unwarranted and fanciful, but in essence heretical and destructive to the common faith. It is a fact of great significance that not only the Symbols, but also most of the Protestant creeds, following the example of Paul, speak with emphasis of the foundation of the apostles and prophets—of the basis of faith and acceptance laid in the fact that the sacred writings came directly from the prophets and apostles whose names they bear. To reject such eminent authorship is a long step toward the rejection of the writings themselves.

The duty of translating the Scriptures, thus providentially preserved, into the various languages and dialects of the world is also enjoined in the Symbols. Protestantism universally arrayed itself against the decree of the papacy in imposing the Vulgate upon all as the only proper language or form in which the Divine Word is to be studied, and in repressing if not forbidding all translations into the common tongues of Europe. It was one of the primary desires of Luther, and of the Reformers universally, that this Divine Book should be in the hands of the people, and that it should be read by the people in their native tongues. So long as this Word was concealed within the folds of an unknown language, so long—as they believed—would the force of its teaching be lost, and so long would a corrupt church continue to tyrannize

over the conscience and the life. Granted full possession of the Word by each believer, and the unrestricted exercise of the right and privilege of private study and interpretation, they were assured that Protestantism could maintain itself triumphantly against the stupendous assumptions of Rome.

It is the glory of Protestantism, and especially of the Protestantism of this century, that in the free spirit of the Reformation it has thus given the Bible to the world; securing its translation into almost every conspicuous tongue, and even into provincial dialects; creating in many instances written languages for this purpose where none existed before; and diffusing the Divine Word in these multiplied forms in every continent, among all nations, and even in the remotest islands of earth. Nor is this simply a necessity to Protestantism viewed as an organization: it is a necessity which lies in the nature of spiritual as distinguished from a formal and hierarchal type of Christianity. For, true as it is that Protestant doctrine, polity, worship, can be maintained only as they are supported by the living Word in the hands of all, it is still more true that Christianity in its broadest, highest form bases itself immediately and always on an open Bible. *The Word of God dwelling plentifully in all*,—to use the strong phrase of the Confession—is the source of its best life and of its spiritual power. One interesting illustration of the loyalty of the Assembly to the Scriptures, and of their zeal in the circulation of the inspired Word in its purity, appears in the record of their memorial to Parliament to seize and destroy two defective or corrupt editions of the Bible published on the Continent, and their discussion of the matter of furnishing Britain with true Bibles upon as easy rates as can be afforded. See also their action (Minutes, 193) petitioning the Houses of Parliament to provide means for the printing of the Septuagint, the famous Alexandrian Codex, presented to Charles I. by the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Passing on from these questions respecting the genuineness and canonicity of the Scriptures, we may turn to note more specifically the position of the Symbols as to the credibility and authoritativeness of the Bible, viewed as an inspired and authenticated Book. Granted the sufficient integrity of the text, and the adequate solution of the problem of source and authorship,—granted also the full significance of the judgment of the Church on all points of canonicity, on what grounds shall it be asserted that the Bible thus determined ought to be believed, and on what

12. Authoritativeness and credibility of Scripture: Evidences internal and external: mandatory power.

basis shall its claim to complete authoritativeness on all points, whether of faith or of duty be placed? The subject has been already introduced in connection with the problem of canonicity: it deserves a more specific consideration at this point.

It is to be admitted that, as already intimated, the Symbols present no specific array of external evidence by which such credibility and authoritativeness may be proved. They indeed make some provision for miracles in the broad statement (V: iii) that while God ordinarily in his providence makes use of means, and works through fixed laws, yet he is *free to work without, above and against them at his pleasure.* So they recognize the reality and worth of prophecy (L. C. 44), especially as represented in the person and the predictions of our Lord,—regarding the latter as illustrations of his omniscient perception of things to come. They also suggest both the historical argument and the moral argument for the Bible in what they say concerning its providential preservation and its peculiar influence as a prime factor in the economy of grace and in human life. Yet, as we have seen, they introduce neither miracle nor prophecy nor any other variety of external evidence in adequate form to prove directly that the Bible is, not merely an authenticated book, but also an authoritative revelation from God. But it is noticeable as an illustration both of their type of religious experience, and of their ordinary modes of viewing the truth that, as we have already noted, they press into special prominence what has been termed the internal ground of such authoritativeness. Additional evidence on this point may be quoted here. The Larger Catechism condenses their judgment in the words: *The Scriptures manifest themselves to be the Word of God by their majesty and purity, by the consent of all the parts and the scope of the whole, and by their light and power to convince and convert sinners, and to comfort and build up believers unto salvation.* The same truth is still further presented and emphasized by the declaration, that the action of the Holy Spirit by and with the Scriptures in the soul of man, is indispensable *fully to persuade* him that they are *the very Word of God.* To this inward assurance even the judgment of the Church is subordinated, however we may be moved by that judgment *to an high and reverent esteem.* This statement rests the whole argument in the case on the experience and conviction of those who have already believed: it would be ineffectual if urged as a primary proof of authoritativeness upon one who should approach the question from the point of doubt or unbelief. The general fact is that none of the Protestant Confessions attempted any description of that strong external

evidence on which primarily the whole question of authoritativeness now rests: they simply appealed even from the judgment of the Church and the historic Councils to this interior proof, and were content with the responsive approval of the soul that for itself has tasted and seen that the Word is precious.

Yet however defective in their statement of the basis on which such authoritativeness rests, the Symbols are conclusive and most emphatic as to the fact. One who studies the debates of the Assembly, so far as they have been preserved, or who examines the doctrinal products of such discussion, cannot doubt as to the place which the Word of God occupied in their estimation. The amount of time spent in their examination of texts of Scripture, with reference especially to their value as supports of certain doctrines, and the skill shown in the use of such texts in the phraseology of the Symbols, are convincing evidences of their unswerving loyalty to the Bible. Their biblical proofs, appended to each chapter and section of the Confession and to the Catechisms, though occasionally faulty in the light of more modern exegesis, clearly indicate their supreme desire to confirm and verify everything by the authentic and authoritative Word. In fact it is the presence of this remarkable scripturalness, and of this unflinching adherence to whatever the Word of God declares, however profound in its mystery or perplexing to faith, to which—even more than to the constant fealty of their doctrinal system to logical rule and philosophic principles—the enduring hold and sway of that system are to be traced. Whatever the grounds of their judgment, they in fact held it as a fundamental axiom that the Scriptures teach, and that clearly and decisively as well as *principally, what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man.*

In respect to the kind and measure of the authority thus vested in the Bible, we find the Symbols most distinct and earnest in their affirmations. The authority of the Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth . . . wholly upon God, the Author thereof: it is to be received *because it is the Word of God.* The authoritativeness in the case is divine, and is therefore forever supreme and final. Without taking up just here the contrast suggested between this and certain other asserted sources of authority in matters of religion, we may in brief note,

First: the absolute and unchallengeable claim of the Bible, as based upon this fact of a divine authorship. So long as there are doubts respecting this cardinal fact,—so long as the human agency in revelation is lifted into prominence to the relative retirement of this divine agency in its production, so long there

will be room for hesitancy or for unbelief in respect to the biblical teaching and requirements. But the moment it is shown by proof sufficient to carry conviction to the intelligent and unprejudiced mind, that the Bible has come to us not from man but from God, and is invested with his personal endorsement as its author, there is no further room for hesitation — no possible ground for unbelief. Man in such a case has no other recourse than to hear reverently what God has spoken, to believe implicitly what is spoken on his authority, and promptly and joyously to obey. What is said of the Moral Law in the Larger Catechism (95) is true of the entire Word: It is of use to all men, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, *binding them to walk accordingly*.

Secondly: The absolute and unquestionable nature of the corresponding duty of faith and obedience. Were such duty dependent on any opinions or decisions of man, or on the determinations of reason or of human authority in whatever form, the sense of personal obligation would of course be correspondingly weakened or invalidated. But in this case the obligation to believe and obey is imperative and absolute: no question or objection can be raised against it, and no hesitation respecting it can for an instant be justified. All men are alike held under this just and solemn responsibility. The claim of the Bible to universal credence and submission is of the same nature as the claim of God himself; and no human being can for a single moment stand in any position where he is justified in evading or ignoring that sovereign claim.

Thirdly: The authoritativeness of Scripture gathers vastly increased significance if we bear in mind its comprehensive character, both as a compendium of belief and as a law of life. For no truth concerning God or ourselves, concerning our moral relations or destinies, concerning salvation in any legitimate aspect of the term, is omitted from the Bible: it comprehends and embraces in the fullest sense and measure all that *man is to believe* in order to salvation. And in all this comprehensiveness, it comes to every soul demanding credence, not of here and there a portion, but of the whole, and of every essential, integral division of the whole,— credence not as if its statements were probable merely, or credence mixed with conscious discount or reservation, but credence absolute and unconditional, both for the present and for all the future. In like manner, its particular precepts and injunctions are seen to include every relation of life, to apply to each soul in all its varied conditions, to reach into the spirit

and the intents of the heart, and thus to rule over man absolutely, comprehensively, interiorly, eternally,—showing us all that *God requires of man* in order that he may be saved. And in the same way it demands, and will receive nothing less than the most entire, unhesitating, cordial submission, not to some portion but to the whole of its comprehensive law of life. The complete authority of God stands behind each particular requirement in the sacred series: the full potency of his supreme personality pours itself into the very least of these commandments. He is himself, in his totality, revealed in every article of belief, and in each mandatory precept, each gracious promise, each judicial warning. Hence the force and worth of the remarkably strong declaration of the Symbols on this vital point,—a declaration which more fully than any found in any other creed of Protestantism, exalts Holy Scripture in both aspects as the rule of faith and the rule of obedience universal, perpetual and perfect.*

This supreme authoritativeness becomes more apparent, as we further note the strong contrast here introduced between the Bible and all other varieties of authority in the sphere of religion. The force of this contrast comes into view only in the light of the antecedent history and position of Protestantism in the aggregate. That position may be indicated by its historic antithesis in the notable decree of Trent, viewed as an authoritative statement of the doctrine of the church of Rome. That Council not only, as we have seen, regarded the Apocrypha as canonical, and set up the Vulgate as the only authorized translation of Scripture: it also added to the Scripture itself the traditions of the Christian fathers, the decisions of the ancient councils, the judgment and consent of the organized household of faith, in whatever form expressed. It indeed explained that the ultimate basis of all patristic or churchly tradition is to be found, obscurely if not

13. Contrast with patristic traditions, with church Councils: Protestantism against Romanism: adequacy of the Bible.

*In affirming thus the sufficiency and completeness of the Bible above all other books as a law of life and a sure guide to salvation, we shall do well to remember the wise caution of Howe, (Sermons on Family Worship) that in declaring the Scripture to be such a rule, we do not mean as severed and cut off from the law of nature, or in opposition to that, or excluding that; but as including it, and as excluding only the unnecessary and arbitrary inventions of men, and the additions that they see fit to subnect to it. Take the Scripture, adds that eminent divine, in conjunction with the frame of most unquestionably natural dictates and sentiments, and then we have an entire discovery of all that is requisite to our acceptable walking with God.

distinctly, in the written Scriptures, yet claimed for such tradition when framed an authoritativeness hardly less potential than that of the inspired Word itself. And though the final step in this direction had not then been taken in the adoption of the dictum of papal infallibility, the Assembly of Westminster was practically confronted by the same error which has in our time been expressed in the words: The Roman Pontiff . . . when in discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines the doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal church, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the Redeemer willed that his church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and therefore such definitions are irreformable of themselves, and not from consent of the church: Vatican Council 1870: Dogmatic Constitution, Ch. IV.

Against such assumption as this whether in the earlier or in the later form, it became Protestantism to make most earnest opposition. That assumption involves a number of errors, which would have been fatal alike to free inquiry in matters of religion, and to the free development of spiritual experience, around the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith. It was an error to suppose that the church was so fully inhabited by the Holy Ghost, as to be in every case guided infallibly in its perceptions or statements of divine truth. It was an equal error to suppose that its opinions once formed, its teachings once expressed, were incapable of alteration or improvement, and must therefore stand for all time as the final and irreversible rule of human belief. But it was an error still more palpable and gross, to suppose that the judgments of the early fathers on points of faith — judgments often mutually contradictory, narrow, sensuous, and at variance with later conclusions drawn by Christian scholarship from the Holy Oracles — were to be added to and accepted as co-ordinate with the teachings of Scripture; or that the decrees of councils, characterized largely by the same defects, and equally unable to bear the tests of thorough inquiry, were invested with like authority. Over against these errors, pernicious in theory but far more pernicious in their inferences and practical effects, Protestantism from the beginning maintained that the Word of God alone is the infallible rule of belief and life,— that while tradition might shed light on the teaching of that Word, it could never become a substitute for or an addition to the Word,— that the Holy Spirit is not promised to the church as an independent

inspirer but rather as a guide in the comprehension of the written Scripture, and in that work does not guarantee the disciple or the church from defective or from erroneous views of the truth,—and consequently that the declarations of councils, Roman or Protestant, even when ecumenical, are not to be taken as authoritative in any primal or final sense of that term.

To this general view, the Symbols give full and elaborate expression. They maintain at the outset that the infallible rule of belief and life *is the Scripture itself*,—that the whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary *is expressly set down in Scripture*, or by good and necessary consequence *may be deduced from it;* and hence that *nothing is at any time to be added thereto*, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or *by the traditions of men.* In the remarkable chapter on Synods and Councils (XXXI) the true relation of the church to the Bible is concisely and forcibly described, and the assumptions of the papacy are guarded against in language to which the experience of succeeding generations has only given added emphasis. It may be, as has been charged, that practically the Assembly in some cases assumed for itself some measure of the authoritativeness which it denied to Rome; and it has certainly been the case that Presbyterians have sometimes asserted for their formularies a degree of significance approaching if not reaching actual infallibilty. Yet it is to be regarded as one of the peculiar values of the Symbols themselves, that they expressly disavow such assumption, and while defining elaborately the degree and kind of mandatory power which the Christian church may justly wield in the sphere of doctrine, guard with more careful precision than any other Protestant creed the rights of the individual as against the church, and the rights of the inspired Word as above both church and disciple.

The perfect adequacy of the Bible as the Word of God is of course implied in what has been already said. A Revelation having such qualities must be sufficient to meet every intellectual or spiritual necessity of man. Hence the Symbols affirm *the entire perfection* of the Scriptures viewed as a revelation; asserting that the whole counsel of God *concerning all things necessary* for his own glory, or for the faith and life and salvation of men, are therein contained. To this Word there is therefore nothing to be added even in the form described as *new revelations of the Spirit:* the Bible as it stands is complete in itself, and is adequate to the needs of humanity universally for all time. The Symbols are thus at variance with all those notions of spiritual communication and enlightenment over and above the Holy Scripture, which

have so often possessed the minds of men. Mysticism, resting on the assumption that the way to knowledge is through holy feeling, has claimed that the soul may thus attain to the possession of spiritual and even saving truth beyond what the Bible affords. Inward illumination is supposed to include a wider domain than Revelation brightens. But all notions of a saving and spiritual light which comes into the soul in addition to the light afforded by the Divine Word, and which becomes not only a guide to what is written, but also a source of information above what is written, are here decisively excluded. While the Symbols emphasize the illuminating as well as regenerating work of the Spirit, they nowhere place the Spirit before us as a complementary or additional revealer of saving truth. Our knowledge of divine things, they tell us, has no other boundary than the Bible: beyond what the Word teaches, no light to guide us as to what should be believed, is to be expected even from the Holy Ghost.

Still less can reliable instruction be derived from any other conceivable form of supernatural communication. Among the sins specified in the Catechism (L. C. 105) are all compacts and consulting with the devil, or harkening to his suggestions; all devising, counseling, commanding, using or anywise approving any religious worship not instituted by God himself; all prying into or misapplying of the divine decrees or providences; all worship of saints, angels or other creatures; and in general all acts which *imply discontent with the Word*, or a desire to know more than the Word has revealed. Modern spiritualism in all its varieties and pretensions is thus tacitly condemned as a departure from that supreme loyalty to the Bible, which must follow upon the recognition of its entire adequacy as a supernatural revelation. The assumption of prophetic foresight or insight is included in this condemnation: *These former ways of revealing his will being now ceased.* The sundry times are ended; the divers manners have reached their culmination in Him who executeth the office of a Prophet in the supreme sense, in revealing to the Church in all ages . . . *the whole will of God in all things* concerning their edification and salvation. The Bible nowhere recognizes the permanent or even the occasional existence of the prophetic endowment in the Church: it represents the miraculous function of believers as ceasing with the apostolic age: it describes the charismatic gifts as temporary rather than continuous: and thus by implication it clearly forbids all adding unto the words of the prophecy of this Book.

In like manner do these propositions stand opposed to the

current notion of a great natural religion, so comprehensive as to include all historic varieties of faith, so absolute as to meet every possible demand of humanity in the future:—a religion of which historical Christianity is indeed to form a part, and among whose sacred books there is to be a place for the Bible, but which is to be wider and higher than Christianity, or than any other single form of belief, and is therefore to become the universal faith of the world. Aside from all the objections to such a scheme, growing out of its ignoring the divine existence and presence and administration among men, or of its idealization of humanity and exaltation of reason, as if man were his own inspirer and the truth were all to be evolved from within;—aside from these, and other overwhelming objections to such a scheme, it cannot for a moment be supposed that the Bible would consent to take any such subordinate position, or that historical Christianity, with its vast array of miracle and prophecy and experimental confirmation, and with its demonstrated adaptations to man in every age and clime and in every spiritual estate, would confess itself a local or provincial or temporary faith, destined to exist for a brief period and within narrow limits only, but finally to be dissolved at last in this absolute and ultimate religion. The Bible itself claims to be the absolute and ultimate book for humanity; and the faith which has sprung in such majestic proportions from that Book, claims to be the absolute and ultimate faith, in which humanity through all its earthly future must rest, and by which alone that humanity can be rescued, redeemed, and united forever with God.

One further general inquiry remains,—an inquiry respecting the right and duty of private interpretation of the Scriptures. Respecting the right of each believer to read and study the Word of God for himself, the Symbols maintain the position assumed by Protestantism from the beginning. It is implied in what has already been noted as to the propriety of translating the Scriptures *into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come*, that the Word of God may *dwell plentifully in all.* It is also asserted that not only the learned *but also the unlearned* may in a due use of the ordinary means attain unto *a sufficient understanding of the truth.* In the Larger Catechism (156) this right or privilege is made the basis of a solemn obligation: it is affirmed that all sorts of people are bound to read the Scriptures apart by themselves, and with their families; Directory for Worship, Chapter XVI. This right and

14. Right and Duty of private interpretation of Scripture.

this duty are in various other ways presented as universal,—including not merely those who already believe, but also all persons to whom the inspired message of salvation may come. The Moral Law, it is said, is of use *to all men*, to inform them of the holy nature and will of God, and of their duty, binding them to walk accordingly. Such was in fact the teaching of Protestantism of every type. The appeal of the Augsburg Confession, and of most of the earlier Protestant symbols was from the decrees and traditions of an usurping church directly to the Divine Word, and to this as made available for the edification not of the priesthood only, but of every disciple. It was to this Word as the final test, rather than to the tests and impositions of such a church, that they sought to bring unconverted men as well as believers. By this standard and this alone were all human professions, acts, lives, destinies, to be measured and determined.

The grounds of this judgment are easily discerned. It is in the Divine Word alone, that the truths which make wise unto salvation, the vital doctrines of grace, are set forth and made authoritative and imperative: it is here alone that the proper conception of salvation, in its varied aspects, and especially in the aspect of justification then so prominent and momentous, can be obtained: it is here that the sinner, burdened with a guilt which no other proposed instrumentality can remove, is able to find assurance and peace. This Word both describes the disease of man more faithfully than all other books, and sets forth more distinctly the divine, the gracious, the universal cure. So far as duty goes, in either its general forms or its practical details, the Scripture alone is a safe ethical and spiritual guide; and only those who walk in the paths it has pointed out, can be assured that they are conforming themselves to the Divine Will. The hopes of man as well as his duties are here distinctly set forth and justified: in this book the foundations of such hope are uncovered, and the oaths and promises of God in confirmation of his grace are recorded; and here, here only, life and immortality are brought to light. And as all these are matters in which each soul must be concerned for itself primarily, they demand from each the strictest personal fidelity, not merely to the right to read, but to the supreme duty of reading and studying this divine message for itself. Right and duty, obligation and privilege, here flow together in parallel lines.

That such is the teaching of the Scripture itself is obvious. While some portions of the Word are addressed to those occupying official positions, or to particular individuals or classes, its messages in general are sent under both the Jewish and the Christian

dispensation to the people, without distinction of class or office. Under the training of Mosaism the people were required to study this Word, treasuring up its truths and precepts in their hearts; and to teach them to their children, in order that the youth from generation to generation might know the will of the Lord. Under the Gospel the instructions of teachers, and even of apostles, are said to be submitted to the church as a body, not merely to be comprehended, but also to be intelligently estimated and weighed by it. The universal law is, that personal responsibility for personal belief implies a corresponding obligation to know personally what God has spoken; and for this personal acquaintance the Bible suggests no substitute. In this respect, Protestantism clearly returned immediately to the divine rule which the papacy had overridden with its assumptions, and to that return its influence and success during the grave crisis of the Reformation were primarily due.

It is a just consequence from this position that no church or council, whether Roman or Protestant, may assume the right to interpret Scripture decisively, or to enforce its interpretations on the individual conscience as binding. Zwingli commenced his famous Articles with the broad proposition, that whosoever affirms that the Evangel is nothing excepting as the church indorses it, is in error, and blasphemes God. There is indeed a regard for the judgment even of individual men in respect to the teachings of the Word which, especially when such private interpreters are known to possess high intellectual and moral qualifications, is incumbent upon every student of this Divine Book. Such regard is not only a privilege but an obligation, and the help thus secured is to be devoutly welcomed. Both the privilege and the duty are magnified as the number and qualifications of such instructors are increased; and when such judgment emanates from an organized church or any large body of disciples, uniting in the expression of beliefs to which they have together been led by their common studies of the Scripture, the obligation and the advantage are proportionally enhanced. And if, according to the ancient motto of Vincentius, any truth of Scripture is received alike by all avowed believers, everywhere and at all periods, he would be a vain and reckless spirit who would lightly cast such a doctrine aside, or unhesitatingly differ from a result so obtained. For it is a far stronger presumption that the Church of God is rightly taught by his Spirit and is holding the truth as he desires, than that any individual in that church should have become the

sole possessor of such truth while all the rest are still living in ignorance.

But there are certain limitations to this general rule which, in view of the assumptions of Romanism in this direction, must be carefully noted. The claim of the Roman church to be the sole expounder of the Word through her priesthood, was openly made and zealously maintained. It was a natural inference alike from her doctrine of the priesthood as a sacred order culminating in the apostolate, and endowed with gifts and prerogatives above those of the household of faith; and from the position assumed in respect to the nature of inspiration, and to the contents and canonicity of Scripture, as defined in the Decreta of Trent. Of a Bible so made up and so authenticated and certified, none but the priestly orders could be legitimate or competent expositors. That famous Council decreed that no one relying on his own skill shall, in matters of faith and of morals pertaining to the edification (or the establishment) of the Christian doctrine—wresting the Sacred Scripture to his own senses or opinions—presume to interpret the said Sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which holy Mother Church,—whose it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the said sacred Scriptures,—hath held and now holds: nor shall any one dare to interpret Holy Scripture contrary even to the unanimous consent of the Fathers, even though such interpretations may not have been intended to be at any time brought to light or made public. Those who contravene this decree—it was added—shall be revealed by those having spiritual charge over them, and shall be punished with the penalties by law provided. Additional emphasis was given to this conclusion by its obvious relations to the Roman conception of salvation, and to the Roman cultus throughout. Faith according to Rome was wholly a passive grace, and submission to ecclesiastical authority was the sum of duty: the church was the channel of all blessings, and obedience to her teachings as well as her requisitions was therefore a primary obligation, and practically the only ground of salvation.

Against this monstrous claim with all its destructive consequences, Protestantism was bound by every cardinal principle to protest. Hence the prominence given to such protestation in most of the creeds, both Lutheran and Reformed, whether continental or insular. The Westminster Symbols, though written many decades after the rest, represent the same strong conviction; and the necessity for such representation was probably deepened in the estimation of the Assembly by the persistent urging of the

opposite doctrine in England, both in the papal and in the modified prelatic forms. For while Episcopacy maintained in the Thirty-Nine Articles that Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, (VI) yet it did not array itself so decisively as most of the other formularies against either tradition or ecclesiastical interpretation and authority in matters of belief. Room was even left for just such assumption in respect to the teaching of the Word as characterized the period when Laud ruled England with nearly regal power, and the mandates of the church were enforced even with civil pain and penalty. That the perception of this liability as existing in prelatic circles and not wholly excluded in the Episcopal symbols, incited the Westminster Assembly to the more earnest and positive enunciation of the Protestant view, cannot be questioned. Hence their more strong and decisive language with respect to the liability of all synods and councils since apostolic times to err, with respect to the authority of such bodies as given not for destruction but for edification, with respect to the necessity for strict consonance between their decisions and the divine Word, and with respect also to the primal duty of men of all sorts to study that Word for themselves without fear of ecclesiastical domination. While they were not at all times consistent with their own teachings, and sometimes did what they here condemned, it is yet to be said for them that they clearly saw and boldly announced the principle on which not Presbyterianism only, but evangelical religion under whatever name must always be based.

15. Scripture its own interpreter: Revelation and Reason.

In accordance with this general position the Assembly further declared that the Bible must be made its own interpreter,—its more difficult portions being explained by the light afforded by its simpler statements, and all being regarded and estimated as parts of one organic and adequate as well as thoroughly divine Book. The Protestant principle of the analogy of faith, so termed, is laid down as a fundamental organon in the interpretation of the inspired Word. Little recognition is given apparently to the fact that there are mysteries in Scripture, such as are discoverable in its doctrine of decrees, or of the person of Christ or his atoning work in certain aspects; or of obscurities, such as the apocalyptic prophecies, which seem to us explicable only in the light which the future

unfoldings of providence may shed upon them. As was natural in that age, the Symbols emphasize the plainness, the clearness, the practical appeal of the Bible to man, rather than its obscurity or its mystery. This is apparent, for illustration, in their affirmation that the sense of the divine Word is *not manifold, but one:*— an affirmation which shuts out the entire notion, so current occasionally in the church, of a variety of senses, external and internal, physical and spiritual, single and complex, not one but manifold. Mysticism in the interpretation of Scripture, in whatever variety or form, is here directly excluded. What may be called English common sense protested against all such fancies,— all ways of covering up the simple truth by fictitious guesses or hypotheses: it held forth the Word as a divine light, shining in its own luster, and competent to be the guide of man into all saving truth. This doctrine of the literal sense, as it was termed, seems to have been a matter of some debate in the Assembly, (Minutes, 114) and the answer doubtless indicates what was the confirmed and final view of the body.

This view is antithetic also to the notion, less current in that age than subsequently, of antagonism between the Scripture and human reason, with its natural consequence in the exaltation of reason as the true and final judge of Scripture. In recognizing the light of nature both as a light shining into the soul from an external world, and as a capacity of the soul to perceive such light and rejoice in it, the Assembly did not intend to exalt this capacity and opportunity as if they could lift man above the need of revelation, or make him the arbiter of the whole question of revelation and salvation. While it is said to be the duty of every one to *search and know*, the field of such searching and knowledge is carefully defined; it is within the Scripture, and in due deference to its character as a revelation, that such inquiry is to be conducted. More than once, as in the chapter on the Eternal Decree, are we taught to handle these high mysteries *with special prudence and care*, attending simply to the will of God as revealed in his Word. In the Larger Catechism (157) it is said that the Holy Scriptures are to be read with an high and reverent esteem for them, and *with a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God.*

Yet the question whether the Bible is indeed that Word, is one which can be determined only upon a rational examination of the evidences supporting its claim: and it may justly be said that the Bible ever welcomes such examination, if it be conducted with the thoroughness and the candor which reason itself and

the nature of the question prescribe. So in the consideration of its particular statements of whatever class, there is always room for the question whether these statements are confirmed by the verdict of individual or of general reason: and here again this divine Word welcomes the most faithful investigation of which the human mind is capable. Indeed, one of the strongest arguments practically for the Bible is derived from this open submission of itself and its teachings to the scrutiny of man, and in consequence from the strong, cordial, combined testimonies of human reason in its behalf. These testimonies, notwithstanding many temporary conflicts around particular issues, such as those arising within the domain of physical science, or in the broad field of intellectual or ethical speculation, are steadily increasing in volume and force. The Bible more and more stands before humanity as a reasonable book,—its claims verified by the understanding as well as accepted by the heart. This is its glory,—this is the culminating proof that it has descended to humanity from God himself. Yet the authority of its teachings does not, cannot rest on this human endorsement: it rests rather in Him by whom the Word is uttered. The Book rises above human reason, and is supreme over it; it teaches doctrines which reason cannot fully penetrate, and demands their acceptance because God has spoken them. Even where its teachings seem at variance with certain conclusions of reason, it still requires acceptance and receives it, on the just ground that a book presenting such evidences of divinity is ten thousand fold likelier to be right than the individual reason that judges it.

In the interpretation of the divine Word the infallible rule is affirmed to be *the Scripture itself*,—one portion being compared with another, and each part set in harmony with the rest, until the composite and complete view is gained. In the language of the Confession, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture, it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly. Constructed as the Bible is, its truths held in solution rather than in crystal, and distributed diffusively through the entire volume, such comparative study of the Word is obviously indispensable. The doctrines of such a book can be set in their proper adjustments only through such a process: its ethical teachings gather their full force only when they are woven into a system and a law: its psalms and prophecies, its promises and warnings, sustain and confirm each other: even its array of facts, historic and biographic, are comparatively without meaning until they are set in order as parts of the one grand

history of redemption. So the corrective to errors which might spring from the exclusive study of one portion, lies in the study of related or antithetic portions; false doctrines derivable from one view are precluded by another; *places that speak more clearly* explain parts which are more obscure. In the aggregate, the statement of the Confession is clearly justified: All those things which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened *in some place of Scripture or other*, that not only the learned, but also the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means *may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.*

The language of the Confession on this point is obviously derived from the British creeds which preceded and largely inspired it. Thus the Thirty-Nine Articles (XX) affirm that the church hath power to decree rights or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith; yet it is not lawful for the church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another. The Irish Articles (5) say: Although there be some hard things in the Scripture . . . yet all things necessary to be known unto everlasting salvation are clearly delivered therein; and nothing of that kind is spoken under dark mysteries in one place, which is not in other places spoken more familiarly and plainly, to the capacity of both learned and unlearned. Note also the quaint language of the first Scotch Confession (XVIII): In the quhilk we affirme that all thingis necessary to be beleeved for the salvation of mankinde is sufficiently expressed. The interpretation quhairof, we confesse, neither appertaines to private nor publick persone, nether zit to ony kirk for ony preheminence or prerogative personallie or locallie, quhilk ane hes above ane uther, but appertaines to the Spirite of God by the quhilk also the Scripture was written.

16. The Spirit interpreting the Scripture: Natural and saving knowledge.

While the right and duty of private interpretation are thus affirmed, and church assumptions and prerogatives are clearly defined, and the supremacy of the Bible in its own explication is maintained, it is also strongly taught in the Confession that the full understanding of the Word, the saving knowledge thereof, is obtainable only through the aid of the Spirit of God. The subject was evidently one of some special interest to the Assembly. It is recorded (Minutes, 111–113) that considerable debate was had about the knowledge of the divine authority of the Scripture; and that the word,

saving, was added in order to limit the sweep of the declaration respecting what was described as the necessity of the inward illumination of the Spirit for the understanding of such things as are revealed. Such necessity was acknowledged in the final framing of the Article, in conjunction with a corresponding recognition of the proper sphere of *Christian prudence* in the application, under the various conditions of human existence, of the *general rules of the Word*. This position is strengthened by the strong declaration in the concluding section respecting the absolute supremacy, above all decrees of councils, all opinions of ancient writers, all doctrines of men, all private spirits, of *the Holy Ghost speaking in the Scripture*. In the section on the internal evidence for the Bible, it is urged as a kindred conclusion that, while this book may be seen on general grounds to be divine, and therefore infallible and authoritative, yet our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is *from the inward work of the Holy Spirit* bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.

Without considering here the full view of the work of the Spirit of God in revealing the truth to man, as well as in regenerating men through the truth, we may well note the general nature of the relation here indicated. We are practically guarded against the illusion already mentioned, that this work of the Spirit is something over and above the written Scriptures—an additional source of knowledge concerning divine things. The illumination here promised is a real *illumination*, but the object made luminous by it is the Scripture, and the Scripture alone. Beyond this divinely prescribed territory, that peculiar radiance is not declared to reach. So we are guarded against the error that the natural mind is capable by itself, without such supernatural aid, of ascertaining all that is needful unto salvation. There is a natural, and there is also a *saving* knowledge,—a knowledge adequate in amount, penetrating and potent in effect, from which a true sense of sin is evolved, and from which true repentance and faith flow. And while it is said to be the duty of all men to learn what they can from nature and from revelation concerning their condition and needs, it is also affirmed to be their duty to submit themselves to this divine guidance, and to complete all their knowledge by coming personally within the range of this divine illumination. In the Larger Catechism (157) we are reminded of our duty to read the Scriptures with a firm persuasion, not merely that they are the very Word of God, but also that *He only can enable us to understand them:* and in the definition of Effectual Calling

(Chap. X) one essential feature in that divine process is said to be, *enlightening the mind spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God.*

Of the ground of the obligation to seek a saving knowledge of the Word of God through the aid of the Holy Ghost, there can be no doubt in any believing breast. If God thus offers by a process upon the mental faculties, or by a work on the moral nature of which such action on the mind itself in order to illuminate or illustrate what is written, is one result, it cannot be a slight thing in his sight to reject that offer, even though such rejection were accompanied by a most sincere or resolute purpose to seek such knowledge by the same methods which are employed in obtaining knowledge elsewhere. But if this offer is made in order to secure moral regeneration through such intellectual quickening,—if divine things are in this way made clearer, so that the soul may be more easily moved out of its sin unto obedience and holiness such as the Gospel requires;—or if such help is given for the development of the work of grace already begun, and in order to sanctify a soul already in some measure illuminated and purified by divine influences, then the guilt of such rejection becomes a thousand fold greater. Not merely the eternal interests of that soul, but also the claims and the honor of Him by whom this gracious proffer is made, are trampled under foot. Nor does it lessen the guilt of such a step, that the process proposed is chiefly unknown and impenetrable, and that we see nothing but the issues or results of this divine work. The illumination, however produced, is a demonstrable reality in human experience: the fact is just as certain as is the existence in the Bible of the promise and pledge of such illumination: and we are therefore simply to receive the saving knowledge thus offered, and reverently to hear and obey the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

17. Closing Survey: Completeness and value of the Symbols on this subject.

One final word: These expositions of the doctrine of the Confession and the corroboratory teaching of the Catechisms respecting the nature and process of Revelation as an inspired communication from God, respecting the canon and contents of Scripture, respecting its authenticity and authority and entire adequacy as an infallible guide of human thought and human action concerning divine things, and respecting the obligation and privilege of studying the Bible, with the help of the Spirit and in the light of every available advantage, yet with supreme loyalty to the Holy Word and to our own responsibility thereto:—these expositions, however cursory, are

sufficient to justify the strong statement of an eminent English divine (Stanley) that the article on Justification in the Decreta of Trent and the chapter on Holy Scripture in the Westminster Confession, are the ablest presentations of dogmatic truth in the whole series of Christian symbols. Of the justness of this statement, ample evidence will be found as to the Westminster chapter, in a careful comparison between its declarations and those of other Lutheran or Reformed creeds. In fullness, in clearness, in practical quality, it may justly be said to surpass every preceding Protestant declaration on the same subject. Compared with the Tridentine decree on Justification, this chapter furnishes a striking illustration of the difference between Protestantism and Romanism. That decree is a marvel of dialectic skill,—clear in distinction, poised in proposition, elaborate in language, and skillful in its summation of the doctrine affirmed. It was the last and best word of Rome in answer to the Reformation; and it was a word of unparalleled sagacity and weight. In several respects it excels even the finest Protestant deliverances on the same vital theme. It crystallizes in the amber of its error some spiritual truth, and so blends the one with the other that we find it hard to discriminate between them. It was a fabrication of the finest logic, combined with the shrewdest sense of adaptation; and for more than two centuries it has held its place as a marble pillar in the temple of Roman belief. But the Presbyterian chapter on the Holy Scripture far surpasses it, if not in logical acumen or elaborate verbiage, still in simplicity of statement, in breadth and power of expression, and above all in true spiritual adaptation. The first was papal and continental and of Latin stock; the second, though insular, was thoroughly Protestant, and full of Saxon sense and Saxon blood. The one was an elaborate construction in defense of a fatal error: the other was an earnest proclamation in support of a divine truth. The aim of the one was to strengthen the power, enlarge the glory, establish the supremacy of the church and the hierarchy; the aim of the other was to exalt God and his inspired Word.

The adaptation of this exposition to the age and to the succeeding ages constitutes one of its most remarkable traits. Chillingworth has well said in language often quoted, that the Bible is the religion of Protestants; and British Protestantism, amid the remaining pleas of papacy and the assumptions of prelacy, needed to be told once more, as Tyndale and Wiclif had taught it, that the Word of God is supreme everywhere and evermore. Nothing but such steadfast emphasizing of the divinity and adequacy of this

Word could have saved the reformation in Britain from being tainted by dangerous error—from dying out through human formalisms. How valuable this declaration became, let the zeal and fidelity and martyrdoms of Scotland during the period following its promulgation bear witness: let the evangelical and fruitful faith which grew up from this root in many parts of England amid trial and sacrifice testify: let the powerful and successful defense of the Bible by the great apologists of England against the able and persistent assaults of English Deism and of French Materialism in the following century, show to the world. The Bible as the very Book of God, high above all opinions of men, high above the authority or voice of the church, uttering its message directly to the individual soul, and ruling all the moral life with a sway only like that which God holds in heaven itself:—this has been the secret of all that is best in British belief, and in the life, personal and political and spiritual, of the men and nations that speak the English tongue.

It cannot well be denied that the teaching of this remarkable chapter stands to-day as the unchanged and the permanent utterance of evangelical Protestantism. Questions of exegesis, questions of canonicity and authorship, questions as to inspiration itself as well as questions respecting the points of harmony between the Bible and philosophy or science or reason, are arising and are likely to arise,—disturbing or possibly overthrowing the faith of some. It is one of the most painful phenomena of the times that so many issues of this class are being raised, not merely by speculating and arrogant skepticism, but within the church, and by those whose standing in the ranks of Christian scholarship gives dangerous emphasis to their subversive teachings. But all such questionings and teachings from whatever source are to be dealt with, not with dogmatic bitterness or in the temper of partisanship, or by the invocation of ecclesiastical pains and penalties, but rather with the most temperate discrimination and fairness, with a more thorough scholarship, and with appropriate charity and sympathy toward errorists, yet with supreme fidelity to the substance and essence of the Truth, and in the serenest confidence that the Word of God, as here described, will abundantly justify itself before the judgment and the conscience of mankind.

LECTURE THIRD—GOD IN HIS BEING.

THE DIVINE EXISTENCE AND NATURE: ATTRIBUTES OF GOD: THE TRINITY IN GOD.

C. F. CHAP. II: XXI:i: L. C. ANSWERS 2, 7–11, 104–114: S. C. 4–6, 46–56.

Starting from their broad and lofty conception of the Bible as an inspired Revelation, the Symbols of Westminster follow the order of some antecedent Reformed Confessions in proceeding directly to a discussion of God himself, in his nature, attributes, purposes and administration. In the ancient creeds the analysis commenced with the doctrine of the Trinity, and with the description of God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. Protestant symbolism began substantially at the same point, yet with a more discriminating statement respecting the divine nature and works in general,—a fact traceable largely to the influence of Scholasticism with its analysis of the older doctrine, and its array of argument and illustration respecting the Godhead generically. It is especially to be noted that the three British creeds antecedent began in the same way with God, taking up and expanding the doctrine of the first in the series: We confesse and acknowledge ane onelie God to whom onelie we must cleave, whom onelie we must serve, whom onelie we must worship, and in whom onelie we must put our trust: Scotch Conf. Art. 1.

It cannot be doubted that this was a natural result of the strong and clear Augustinianism stamped at the outset on the Reformation, and especially dominant wherever the influence of Calvin prevailed. To those who had been trained in that system, it was natural to declare that the Scriptures *principally* teach what man is to believe *concerning God:* and furthermore, that it is the main aim of the Scriptures (L. C. 6) to *make known what God is*, the persons in the Godhead, his decrees, and the execution of his decrees,—as if all knowledge respecting man, his sin and its fruits, could be apprehended only in the light of this preliminary revelation. Had the Symbols followed rather the order of some more recent theological systems, and commenced with the biblical teachings as to what we are to believe concerning man, approaching from

that side the ultimate problem of salvation, the subsequent theology of Protestant Christendom might have been considerably varied. If it be objected that in such contemplation of God as first and primary, we are plunged into great mysteries—confronted by apparently insoluble problems respecting the divine nature and purposes and modes of activity, still we are the more likely on the other side to gain by this process the broadest views of both sovereignty and grace, and more readily to apprehend man just as he was and is, and through grace may become. God is legitimately first in all theology, since it is only through the true knowledge of God that man can be made wise unto salvation.

1. God defined: Divine existence affirmed: Qualities of this affirmation.

Definitions or descriptions of God, more or less full and elaborate, are found in most of the Protestant symbols. The Augsburg Confession (Art. I) affirms that there is one divine essence which is called and is God; eternal, without body, indivisible, of infinite power, wisdom, goodness,—the Creator and Preserver of all things visible and invisible: note also the Second Helvetic Conf. Chap. III., and the Belgic Conf., Art. I. The language of the French Confession, Art. I, is especially definite and emphatic: We believe and confess that there is but one God, who is one sole and simple essence, spiritual, eternal, invisible, immutable, infinite, incomprehensible, ineffable, omnipotent: qui est toute sage, toute bonne, toute juste, et toute misericordieuse. It is interesting to compare with these declarations of continental Protestantism the extensive and finished decree of the Vatican Council of 1870: The Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one true and living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, almighty, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intelligence, in will and in all perfection;—who as being one, sole, absolutely simple and immutable spiritual substance, is to be declared as really and essentially distinct from the world;—of supreme beatitude in and from himself, and ineffably exalted above all things which exist, or are conceivable, except himself. The first in the Thirty-Nine Articles affirms more briefly, that there is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. This language is transcribed without change in the Irish Articles, and is evidently the germ of the more expanded declaration of the Westminster Confession. But the expansion and elaboration of that germ are so marked as to set that Confession quite above any

preceding creed of Christendom, in respect to the fullness and the grandeur of its delineation of the Divine Being. The definitions given in the two Catechisms are equally full and explicit: that in the Shorter Catechism, (4) has never been surpassed;—God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

In taking up the doctrine of the divine existence and nature as thus presented in the Symbols, we may first note their broad and strong affirmation of the fact that God exists. It is to be borne in mind that the questions respecting the divine existence which have so much agitated men in later times, were hardly raised during the era of the Reformation. Protestant and Romanist alike rested not merely on the general fact of the divine existence as held in the ancient church, but on the several arguments for such existence developed or expanded by the Scholastics,—regarding the scriptural statements as abundantly confirmed by such testimonies. Even the more intricate question of the trinity in God and the associated question respecting the character of the triune Diety, and the relations of that character to our salvation, were practically settled beyond question in the general judgment. It was rather the plan of God in salvation, the problem of justification, the nature and scope of grace, the freedom of the will, the ministries of the Spirit, and other kindred problems, which absorbed special interest, and became the center of practical conflict, not between Romanist and Protestant only, but largely also among those who agreed in wearing the Protestant name.

The Symbols follow naturally this general tendency, and rest the fact of the divine existence rather on affirmation than on reasoning or evidence. The voice of the Divine Word is regarded as sufficient; and that Word simply declares that there is one, and but one, only living and true God. Without referring at this point to any evidences which are introduced incidentally, we may contemplate here the mingled simplicity and assurance of the affirmation itself. It may be presumed that the divines of the Assembly were familiar with both the ancient and the scholastic demonstrations; and the fact that these are nowhere introduced, indicates their conviction that the doctrine might be safely left to make its own way into popular conviction. The question no more needed formal argumentation, in their judgment, than the kindred question whether man exists. It may be that they did not regard the knowledge of God as manifested immediately in consciousness, as the knowledge of self is; but they certainly

viewed it as a knowledge which the moral nature of man readily receives, to which the human conscience spontaneously pays reverence, and which even the spirit of unbelief cannot well resist. Hence their constant and confident suggestion of the truth as if it were axiomatic: hence their steadfast assumption of the doctrine, as one which needed no demonstration.

It may be questioned whether their example is not worthy of consideration if not of imitation, even in an age when unbelief negative and positive is assailing this, together with almost every other cardinal truth of the Christian religion. Though it be queried whether true knowledge of God as the Infinite One is attainable, or whether scientific or philosophic demonstration of his existence can be framed, or whether the belief in such existence is justifiable even as matter of faith, yet the truth is not likely to be eliminated from the mind or the conscience of mankind, by whatever form of challenge. There are deep necessities in human nature, especially when that nature is made to realize its condition as sinful, for which this truth alone can furnish adequate satisfaction, and which no possible form of speculative doubt or unbelief can really supply. It is a suggestive fact, that the assaults of sin upon the doctrine have been and are more bitter, more often in a sense successful, than those of philosophic infidelity, even in its most subtle or winning forms. Yet out of the soul of the sinner there comes a solemn and forceful protest against his own unbelief; and the truth that there is a God, comes back upon him with a resistless power. His reason, his conscience, his heart alike cry out for the living God. With Augustine his moral nature finds no rest, till it finds that rest in the one only living and true Deity. And in fact this deep and universal experience is itself an evidence largely superseding other evidences, rendering argumentation comparatively needless, and forever justifying the truth, as the divine Word and the Christian creeds set it forth.

2. Arguments incidentally suggested: Proofs from nature, from man.

Passing to consider briefly such evidences as are incidentally suggested in the Symbols in support of this doctrine, we may note especially the allusions to the argument, cosmological and teleological, which physical nature in so many forms supplies. The opening sentence in the Confession affirms that the light of nature and the works of creation and providence *manifest* the goodness, wisdom and power of God, and therefore his existence as a personal Being possessing such attributes, apart from nature and supreme over it. The

chapter on Religious Worship (XXI) declares that *the light of nature showeth that there is a God* who hath lordship and sovereignty over all; who is good and doeth good unto all; and who is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. Again in the Larger Catechism (2) it is said that the very light of nature in man, *and the works of God*, declare plainly that there is such a Being. So in the chapter on Creation (IV) it is taught that the final end of all created things—the one great issue in which created existence finds its explanation, is the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness,—the whole being designed to bear testimony not only to the fact that God exists, but also to his character as thus made manifest to man. It is a noticeable fact that, beyond merely general allusions to these teachings of nature, the continental creeds contain no definite suggestion of evidence or proof as to the divine existence. This defect may be traced partly to the absence of speculative opposition to the universal faith, and in part to the general tendency to appeal to internal rather than external testimonies respecting the cardinal elements in Christian belief. Yet it should be said that, if such evidence does not appear in these formularies, the truth was fully recognized by the leading minds of the Reformation. Melancthon, for example, affirmed that the human mind—*intuens opificium mundi*—perceives that there is a God, eternal, potent, sapient, just and good, punishing the unjust, hearing and assisting the just. Luther held in like manner that a knowledge of God is thus implanted in the heart and conviction of men. Calvin taught (Inst. B. I, 3-6) that the human mind is naturally endued with the knowledge of God, yet strongly affirmed the need of Revelation in order to make such knowledge effectual in spiritual experience.

Whatever may be said respecting the inadequacy of the cosmological and teleological evidences suggested by the language of the Symbols, there can be no question that the argument is in fact one which men will not be willing to set aside. As long as effects and causes are seen, and are discovered to stand in some natural and potential relation, so long will the human mind continue to pass upward from the world or the universe viewed as an effect, to the conception of a cause mighty enough to produce them,—not in the least baffled in its conclusion by the speculative conception of an eternal series of such causes, beginning nowhere and explaining nothing. And so long as men see design in nature, and find proofs at ten thousand points of the existence of

a mind behind and above nature, stamping these evidences of design everywhere upon what it has created, so long will men pass upward to the conclusion that the cause of which all these are effects, is personal—possesses intellectual and moral qualities such as are manifested in the things that are made. The affirmation of Cicero, in the Tusculan Questions, that God can be apprehended by us only as a mind pure (or simple) and free, separate from all mortal (or fleshly) concretion, knowing and controlling all things, but itself animated by sempiternal energy, is one which will always commend itself alike to the intelligence and to the conscience of mankind. So while men look forward to the outcome and result of nature and of man, and ask for the great end that can both explain and justify all that is seen in the ongoings of nature and in the history of humanity, they will find the explanation only in the thought of One in whom and to whom as well as by whom are all things. Though it may be said with some degree of warrant, that such reasonings fail because they rest finally on intuitional hypotheses, or because they cannot be thrown into logical form, or because they prove more than is proposed, or because they do not relieve the doctrine from mystery, yet they have real and convincing force; and men will steadfastly return to them with a deep conviction that they make clearly manifest to the reason, if they do not absolutely demonstrate to the understanding, the truth affirmed. Those who give them any sober thought will spontaneously say with an ancient apologist: Just as when we see a well appointed vessel on the sea, we conclude that she has a pilot on board, so from the regular course of the planets, the rich variety of the creation, we infer the Creator. Or with Gregory of Nazianzus: We infer the existence of the Creator from his works, just as the sight of a lyre reminds us of him who made it and of him who plays it. Herbert Spencer (First Principles) admits that we are obliged to regard every phenomenon as a manifestation of some Power by which we are acted upon. Though that eminent author pronounces this Power incomprehensible, and its omnipresence even unthinkable, yet the nature of the phenomena to which he refers clearly shows beyond question that this power is not only infinite or at least immeasurable in potency, but is no less infinite in wisdom, righteousness and goodness. And such a power, both resident in nature and supreme over it, can be none other than our God, although the astute philosopher refused to draw this inference from his own premise.

It is an interesting fact that the Symbols, while thus suggesting

the more external evidence, seem to rest more largely upon the inward conviction—on *the light of nature* in the soul, as more convincing even than the wondrous testimonies of the material universe. Man in this view becomes himself the greatest argument,—not merely in the accumulated proof furnished by the biographies of individuals or the history of the race, but rather in what man knows himself to be as a rational and moral being, whose supreme end is to *glorify God and enjoy him forever*. It is a striking fact that both Catechisms commence with a proposition so abstract, so broad, so powerful as this,—a proposition not derived immediately from Revelation, but rather drawn avowedly from the light of nature, the innate conviction of the soul. The aim of the Assembly seems to have been to start with a statement at once so simple and so comprehensive that, while all would spontaneously accept it, it might be made the corner-stone of their entire superstructure. It implies that God exists as well as man; that this God created man, and created him for an adequate purpose; that the glory of God is the end for which man is made, and that man is such a being that he can find true enjoyment, the highest consummation and felicity of his being as a creature, only in recognizing his relations to God, and in glorifying him, not for time but forever and ever.

The argument for the existence of God thus derivable from what man is seen to be, as a creature capable of serving and glorifying and enjoying such a Being, is one of the highest value in our time. The general assumption that God exists, derived from other sources, may be strongly verified by such study of what man is as to the laws of his being, the fixed elements in his constitution, his best instincts and aspirations and tendencies. For, taken in his totality, man is to be accounted for, not simply in the matter of his origin, nor simply in his present manifold life and experience, but still more in his possible growth, experience, and destiny. To fancy that such a being sprang from blind protaplasmic germs, or was developed from a progressive series of creatures having few if any of these mental and moral characteristics, seems strangely unphilosophic. It would be much more in harmony with the facts to think of him as the stray child of some higher parentage, endowed with celestial tastes and affinities, but immured in some way within this earthly prison of flesh. But even this better supposition would fail to explain all the obvious facts in the case: a still higher parentage is requisite—a still sublimer origin must be sought. Where is the explanation of man? From what source did he come; to what purpose was he formed; whither is he moving,

and where must he finally pause, with every power rightly utilized, and his felicity forever complete? There is but one answer to such questions—but one conclusion to such reasonings. That answer, that conclusion, is God,—the only living and true God.

Postponing for the present the inquiry as to the method of God in creation, and specifically in the creation of man, we may note here the singular felicity with which the Symbols seem to anticipate much of modern speculation as to the moral nature and to the spiritual endowments of man, viewed in his relation to the Divine Being whose existence is thus affirmed. Carlyle was none too ardent in characterizing the somewhat current hypothesis that the thoughts of men are but brain secretions, that what we call reason is only a higher form of animal instinct or intelligence, and that the conscience, the moral sentiments, the spiritual aspirations of mankind are but evolutions of something which appears in less developed degree in lower orders of existence, as a gospel of dirt. If man could thus be materialized, and all that makes him man could be thus generalized away and exhaled into mere matter or energy in the interest of an anti-deistic theory of nature and its origin, then indeed we might cease to discuss the question whether there is a God above nature and supreme over nature. As if in anticipation of such sensuous conceptions, the Symbols grandly say what both the reason and the heart of humanity affirm: God hath (II: ii) all life, glory, goodness, blessedness in and of Himself and is . . . *the alone fountain of all being*, of whom, through whom and to whom are all things.

3. The unity of God taught: Polytheism in all forms illicit.

The conception of God as one, one only, presents itself at this point for special consideration. The doctrine of the divine unity is strongly maintained in the chapter specially under examination. The divine Being is described in the clause just quoted as having all life and glory *in and of himself*, and also as *alone in and unto himself*. Nor is this underlying truth obscured or nullified by the declaration immediately following, that in *the unity of the Godhead* there be three Persons. For whatever the conception of the Trinity may include, it is never to be taken as antagonistic to this fundamental fact of unity. God as a Being is eternally the one only living and true God. In the exposition of the first Commandment (L. C. 105–110) it is presented as our primary duty to know and acknowledge God to be *the only true God and our God*, and to worship and glorify him accordingly. What is forbidden in this commandment, is

said to be the denying or not worshiping and glorifying the one true God as our God, and the giving that worship and glory to any other which is due to him alone. In various other forms this doctrine of the divine unity is held forth in the Symbols as one of the cardinal principles of the Christian faith.

The doctrine thus stated stands opposed to all forms of polytheism, whether in belief or in worship. Among the sins especially condemned in the exposition of both the first and the second commandment is idolatry, with all its concomitant errors,—its degenerate notions respecting divine things, its multiplied gods, its total failure to conceive of the one God as he truly is. Polytheism and idolatry are nearly identical terms; idolatry may not of necessity be, but in fact almost always is, polytheistic. The great natural religions, which some minds in our time are endeavoring to compare favorably with Christianity, are invariably corrupted by the disposition of the natural heart to multiply deities for each of its fancied or real needs. Oriental dualism, based on the apparently conflicting phenomena of good and evil in nature and in human life, is the simplest form of this tendency. Augustine (City of God, B. IV) shows vividly to what fearful extent polytheism was carried both in the multiplication and in the degenerate conception of the gods recognized and worshiped in the Pantheon of Rome. Mohammedanism, which had its root historically in Hebraism, is almost the sole exception to this tendency. But polytheism even in its simplest forms, is necessarily destructive of the power and substance of true religion. The best sentiments of the soul cannot be poured out in worship at more than a single shrine: the regulative principles in the religious nature lose their potency and become inoperative, if they be not sustained by faith in one God only, both single and supreme. It is obvious that the final election of humanity must be a choice between monotheism and atheism: polytheism and pantheism are at best but intermediate and temporary substitutes. One God or none, must be the ultimate alternative. And this one God must be, not a deity existing simply as the unifying principle in human thought, or an ideal sublimation of all excellences developed in human life, or as an impalpable spiritus pervading nature, but a real Being, existing above nature and beyond the imaginings or analyses of men, in the unity of his own supreme and glorious personality. He who rejects the conception of such a Being, will find rest nowhere except in the utter ignoring or the utter denying of any and all supernatural existence.

The doctrine of the absolute unity of God as a Being is an

essential element in the faith of Christendom universally. The strong statement of the latest Vatican Council has already been quoted: God is the one, sole, absolutely simple and immutable spiritual substance. Both the Confession of Mogilas and the Longer Catechism of the Greek Church affirm the doctrine with equal emphasis. The Protestant formularies invariably declare and teach that, in the language of the Second Helvetic Confession, God is one and one only in essence and nature, subsisting in himself and in himself sufficient unto all things. And in emphasizing the subsequent tenet of the trinity in God, they are in every instance careful to affirm that this trinity in no way antagonizes or subverts the underlying and more primal fact of unity. They follow at both points, as we shall have further occasion to note, the method of the Scriptures,—guarding carefully on the one hand against Socinian error, and on the other against what may be described as tritheistic orthodoxy. It is not needful here to present the varied and numerous forms in which the unity in God is set forth in the inspired Word,—in the Mosaic economy, in the Hebrew psalmody, in the prophetical writings, and equally in the New Testament. Nor is it important to point out in detail the philosophic basis on which the doctrine reposes. That the mind is so constituted that it cannot conceive of more than one such being as God is defined in all Christian symbolism to be,—that the physical universe manifests the existence of one, and but one organizing and controlling Mind,—that the moral nature and convictions of man can be satisfied with no other conception,—that personal religion flourishes in the human soul only as polytheism in whatever variety is thrown aside, and the one God of Revelation is made the single and absorbing object of love and adoration:—these more speculative evidences abundantly justify on rational grounds our faith in the biblical teachings respecting this fundamental article of Christian belief. We see in nature or in Scripture but one God: we believe in one God only, though he be triune in person; and one God only do we trust, obey, adore.

4. God a self-existent Spirit: Personal, fontal, creative.

That this one and only God is a Spirit, and that as such he exists in and unto himself, deriving his life and glory and blessedness from himself alone, is a doctrine closely associated with the preceding. However difficult it may be to conceive of that primal cause which differs from all other causes in having no relation to any causal force behind or above itself, yet the conception of such a cause presents itself

to the reason as the only possible alternative to the absurd hypothesis of an endless series of such causes, each potent enough to create its successor, and all personal and intelligent—running back forever. In like manner, difficult though it may be to frame a distinct, intelligible thought of God—incomprehensible as it may seem to the philosophic mind to fashion any rounded conception of the infinite, yet the vision of such an infinite One, from whom all other beings are derived, and in whom they find their consummation, is something which philosophy cannot refuse to recognize as a legitimate tenet of faith, and which the heart of man welcomes as the just foundation of its holiest experiences—its purest life. While Hamilton follows Kant and Coleridge in affirming that the conception of such an absolute Spirit cannot be regarded as having an adequate philosophic basis, he still recognizes the conception as having firm foundation in our moral nature, and as indispensable to the proper development of the religious sentiment existing in man as man. It is true that self-existence differs from all created existence in certain vital respects, yet the fact of created existence seen everywhere else does not disprove the affirmed fact of self-existence somewhere. Rather is it true that created existence cannot be accounted for in any of its forms, except on the hypothesis that there exists somewhere One who lives *in and unto himself*.

The doctrine of self-existence carries with it the doctrine of the divine spiritualty. As God is one, and as the sole cause and ground of his existence is in himself, so that existence must be independent of matter, and of all materializing appendages. Spirituality is not to be conceived of as merely a quality or attribute in God; it is rather his nature itself—the fundamental fact or element in his constitution. In the words of the Larger Catechism, (4) God is a Spirit essentially,—infinite in being, glory, blessedness and perfection; and the Confession adds that he is alone in and unto himself *all-sufficient* because he is thus pure Spirit. Among the things said to be forbidden in the second Commandment is the making any representation of God, of all or any of the three Persons, either inwardly in our minds, or outwardly in any image or likeness of any creature whatsoever. Anthropomorphic and anthropopathic representations of God, and all kindred delineations of his nature or activities, which seem to bring him down to the level of human life or experience, are here clearly interdicted, so far as they go beyond the language and method of the Scripture itself. The biblical anthropomorphisms never mislead us or corrupt our spiritual conceptions. In

the same direction we are taught (L. C. 109) that the acceptable way of worshiping God is instituted by himself, and is so limited by his revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations or devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, *under any visible representation*, or in any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures. These prohibitions and injunctions rest specifically on the proposition, that God is a Spirit in and of himself, and is therefore to be worshiped in spirit and in truth.

The teaching of the Catechism on this point expresses tersely the intense conviction of Protestantism universally respecting the veneration of images and pictures, as practiced by the Roman and partially by the Greek communion. The Council of Trent emphasizing antecedent usage, declared that images of Christ, of the Virgin Mary, and of the saints ought to be had and retained in temples, and that due honor and veneration should be given them,—not indeed because of any virtue resident in them, or of any efficiency possessed by them as images, but because of the honor due to those persons whom they represent. The Greek Catechism in like manner affirms (518-522) that it is no violation of the second Commandment to honor icons (pictures) as sacred representations, using them as helps in the pious remembrance of the works of God and of his saints. But the Protestant creeds, from that of Augsburg and the Articles of Smalcald down to the Scotch Confession and the Thirty-Nine Articles, are united and most positive in their hostility to such image-worship in whatever variety. We reject alike, says the Second Helv. Conf. both the idols of the heathen and the simulacra of Christians: we affirm that God cannot be expressed by any art or image, and that all such representations of him are falsity. Calvin denounces such representations as prodigies of impiety, and argues strenuously against them as constituting gross and corrupting departure from the simplicity of true spiritual worship such as God requires. British Puritanism was, if possible, even more emphatic in its condemnation,—becoming at times even fanatical in its iconoclastic demonstrations. Rutherford (Soume of Christian Religion), expresses the general conviction of Scotland in his quaint saying: Wee ar forbiddin ether to mak or to worship ane image representing God, or to give ether inward or outward worship, ether with heart or knee or bodie to any creature or image.

This biblical conception of spirituality is to be carefully distinguished from various false or defective notions concerning God. It differs radically from pantheism in either its ideal or its more material forms. God as a Spirit is no mere principle,

unifying and centralizing in itself all human thought. He is no pervasive, impersonal element in material things,—an unconscious anima mundi, holding all other existence, conscious or unconscious, in some species of unity. Nor is he a merely subjective conception of the human intellect, uniting thought and matter in one, but having no demonstrable existence objectively and apart from them. As a Spirit God is truly and forever personal; as pure Spirit he exists in complete independence alike of all material existence however etherialized, and of the loftiest dreams or ideals of the mind of man. Back of all his relations to other beings or activities or to all knowledge,—behind even his primal relations to space and time, he is simple Spirit, Spirit only and altogether, and as such in the highest sense of the term a personal Being. Whatever the term, personality, means as applied to man, or to those higher varieties of being which are not associated with flesh and blood as man is, all such meaning is concentrated and illustrated illimitably in God.

He is therefore the fontal Spirit—the Lord and Giver of all life, whether physical or spiritual, in the strong phrase of the Belgic Confession, *omnia vivificantem et conservantem*. In the chapter on Creation (IV) it is said that it pleased him to make, or create of nothing, the world and all things therein; and in the same chapter his creation of man in his own image is represented as the summit of his creative efficiency. In the remarkable description of him in the chapter now specially under consideration he is represented as *the alone fountain of all being*, of whom, through whom, to whom are all things. In the definition of his providence (S. C. 11) as his most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions, it is implied that the lives thus preserved and governed, originated with him, and are under his providential guidance in virtue of that primal origination. This interior vitality in God can indeed be conceived of only through some form of imagery or comparison; it cannot be defined intrinsically. It is opposed entirely to the observed quiescence of matter; it is contrasted equally with the occasional rest or equilibrium of physical energies; it stands over against all possible forms of disintegration or decay. It is life in the most ethereal form, in the highest degree, in the supremest perfection. It is as incomprehensible as it is underived: it is immutable, illimitable, everlasting. All possible activity, potency, blessedness are in it: it is an ocean of being, past all measurements and past all comprehension. And from this source all other beings and activities flow: it is the true and only fountain

of all existence. Angels, other orders of moral existence, man, and even inferior creatures, are but the issue of this countless and prolific vitality: in Him we live and move and have our being.

5. God the Absolute Spirit: His Dominion original and complete.

The absoluteness of God, based on what he is in his own spiritual nature, and on his fontal and creative relations to all other existence, is strongly affirmed in the Symbols, both as an independent proposition, and as a basis for the consequent conception of the divine decrees and administration. He is absolute in the sense of being all-sufficient in and unto himself,—*not standing in need of any creatures* which he hath made, or deriving any glory from them. He is absolute also in the sense of being himself the final end of all his activities,—all things being not merely of him and through him, but also *to him and for him*. He is absolute likewise in the sense of complete and unquestionable control; having in himself *most sovereign dominion* over all creatures, to do by them, for them or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth. In each and all of these aspects, it is implied that God is the absolute as well as creative Spirit,—sovereign dominion in the most complete sense being of necessity included in the pure and perfect spirituality from which it flows.

It is sometimes unjustly charged upon the Confession, that it bases the entire scheme of divine truth on an abstract conception —the conception of decrees or predestination. That some expositions of the Confession have been open to this charge,—have started in this way from a philosophic axiom, rather than from divine verities, and have thus planted the Christian doctrine on an abstraction, is doubtless true. But every careful student of the Symbols will discover that the determination of God as to what he will do—his scheme and plan of things, and his purpose to carry that plan or scheme into complete execution, as well as all his consequent actions, are there rested on what God himself is, especially as the absolute Spirit. His decree or decrees are not presented as abstract hypotheses, intuitively perceived as true in and of themselves, but rather as the manifestations of his own spiritual being—the development even from eternity of his own fathomless nature and life. God is a being such in himself and in his relations to all his creatures, that he cannot be true either to what he is inherently or to their needs as his creation, without having a scheme, a design, a purpose, which includes them and which comprehends the whole of what they are or have been, or ever can become. And for the same reason his supreme and

effectual activities, whether in the lower sphere of physical nature where absolute necessity rules, or in the moral sphere where he carries out his will in conjunction with human or angelic freedom, can be nothing else than the orderly evolution of his eternal purpose,—the unfolding in fact and history of his sovereign design. This is not an abstract notion; it is hardly a logical deduction; it is but another aspect of the truth that God is a Spirit, pure, complete, absolute.

Without forestalling here the analysis of the ruling idea of the divine decrees, as found in the Symbols, we may note the practical fact just described as one which sheds light on the entire problem of predestination. That the Bible associates the divine decrees with the divine nature, and asserts the sovereignty of God, not as an arbitrary, inexplicable, forbidding assumption, but rather as the natural and necessary and glorious outgrowth of what he is as the absolute Spirit, cannot be questioned. It nowhere separates the two, but rather describes the decree as the issue and consequence of the nature—a consequence or issue that must follow from the nature, and that cannot be withheld without impairing our conception of the nature, and making God less than he really is. So in the Confession, the chapter on the Eternal Decree (III) strong as it is, forbidding in some aspects, objectionable at least in some of its phraseology, is made much more clear and persuasive, and unquestionable also, when read in the light of the chapter preceding, with its impressive and just and inspiring delineations of the Divine Being, as he is in himself —the fontal, creative, absolute Spirit. Just as much of the criticism made upon the doctrine of predestination, as Calvin presents it, fades away in the judgment of those who carefully study his antecedent descriptions of the One Divine Essence and of the True God as distinguished from all false deities, (Inst. B. I:11–14), so much of the objection urged against the Calvinistic scheme as set forth in the Westminster Confession, vanishes when it is seen how clearly, how naturally and how inevitably that scheme in its main features flows directly from the cardinal fact of the divine spirituality. God as a Being, existing in and of himself, the source and fount of all other existence—the primal and eternal and absolute Spirit—must in some true sense, plan, purpose, decree and execute whatsoever comes to pass. And all attempts to limit the sweep or the application or execution of the regulative purpose or decree, by any hypothesis or suggestion that detracts in the slightest degree from this view of him as

such a Spirit, must fall to the ground: neither Scripture nor philosophy can sustain them.

6. God as infinite, eternal, unchangeable Spirit: His omnipresence.

As a Spirit thus underived, personal, fontal, absolute, God is also infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being and nature. These are qualities inherent in the divine constitution,—essential characteristics of the divine existence. They differentiate God still further, not only from all varieties of physical being, but from all created spirits which are finite in both sphere and capacity, temporal in origin, and subject in many ways to change. The term, infinite, is applicable to him both intensively and extensively. On the one side it is an affirmation that his being is not limited or restrained by any of those boundaries which confine and narrow human or angelic existence. Such infinitude is not a merely negative conception; it is also a positive intuition, although it transcends the limits of human reason, and stands before us as a truth too vast and grand for finite comprehension. It exhibits God to us in his transcendence, as existing far above the conditioning limitations which surround all finite being—forever alone and unapproachable in his sublime infinitude. We cannot say, Luther eloquently declares in his discussion of the Abendmahl, that God is an outstretched, long, broad, fixed, high, deep Being: he is a supernatural, incomprehensible, ineffable Being, existing wholly in every grain of sand, yet at the same time in, above and beyond all creatures.

The term is also extensive in significance; and in this sense is synonymous with such terms as immensity and omnipresence. God is immense in the sense that his greatness is beyond all delineation and measurement,—not in the pantheistic sense sometimes suggested, that he includes the entire creation, physical and spiritual, within himself. He is in all things though not included in them; he is without all things but is not excluded from them. He is also omnipresent in the three-fold sense ascribed to him by Scholasticism: present as knowing perfectly all things in all parts of his vast creation, present as exerting his omnipotent energy immanently through both the physical and the moral universe, present also in some transcendent sense essentially in and through as well as over all created things. It is not implied in this statement that God is diffused through space, as light or air may be;—as pure Spirit he cannot be thus distributed. Rather is it true that he is at one and the same time wholly, or in his totality as a Spirit, in each and every place

throughout this measureless expanse of finite being. As another has said, diffusion and contraction, extension and circumscription, are not to be affirmed of God: he is equally near to and equally far from every point of space and every atom of the universe. He is universally and immediately present, not as a body but as a Spirit,—not by motion or penetration or filling, as would be predicated of a diffused fluid, or in any way as if his infinity were composed of a countless number of finite parts, but in a way peculiar to his own spiritual and perfect nature. It is a remark of Hamilton that while physical action is limited by both space and time, mental action is not conditioned by space, though it be limited by time. In an infinitely higher sense is God unconditioned by space, though himself immanent in the physical as in the spiritual realm, sustaining and directing all its energies, and making all things subservient to his supreme purpose. To use a familiar scholastic statement, his centre is everywhere while his circumference is nowhere—he is in and through all, yet above all.

And as God is above space while in a sense ever present within it, so is he above all time—eternal as well as infinite in his being. As pure and fontal and absolute Spirit, he is entirely beyond those limitations in duration by which all finite creatures are bounded. It is an old and familiar definition which describes his eternity as the perfect possession at once and altogether of interminable or measureless life. All conceptions of duration are lost in his boundless infinitude. We are not indeed to regard all ideas of succession as excluded from the divine mind. God sees events in nature or in human life as occurring in chronological as well as in logical relationships, and himself produces events, such as creation and the fall, the incarnation and redemption, in a distinct order of time,—if not by successive acts of creative or providential or gracious efficiency. Yet to him the distinctions of past and present and future exist in a relative measure only. He never forgets the past or loses the sense of it as eternally present: to him the future is no more vague or dim than the passing hour. All succession proceeds from him and is controlled by him from the high throne of his eternity. Through all mutations of nature or of humanity, he remains the same self-existent and absolute Spirit as before time began to be, and will so remain, the one Eternal Being, yesterday, to-day and forever.

God is also an unchangeable Being,—existing evermore as the enduring ground across whose surface all finite mutations pass, but whose serene depths are never agitated by mortal disturbance. He is unchangeable in respect to all those constitutional elements

or qualities which have already been ascribed to him as the one eternal Spirit. He is unchangeable also in respect to all those moral attributes, wisdom and power, holiness and justice, goodness and truth, which belong of right to his character, his moral personality, rather than to his constitution or nature. As it is impossible for him to be otherwise than an absolute Person, infinite and eternal, so in a reverent sense of the phrase, it is impossible for him to be otherwise than just and good and true, either in his executive administration or in his interior life as a moral being. Any mutation which should affect either his natural or his moral attributes in themselves, or which should materially modify his manifestations of these attributes in his relations to man or to nature, is simply inconceivable. Change for the better is impossible, since he is already perfect: change for the worse is no less impossible to a perfect being such as he. No such change can occur from within by his own volition, nor can any power exist outside of him which is adequate to produce or compel such change. Such immutability is necessarily involved in the conception of his eternity: from everlasting to everlasting he must be the same. But such unchangeableness does not imply emotionless passivity in God. The biblical descriptions of variation in the divine feeling toward man, or of modifications in the divine administration over man, are to be taken as representing important and practical truth, though such truth must ever stand in entire harmony with that underlying immutability—not immobility—which belongs inherently to him as the eternal and absolute Spirit. There may indeed be changes of relation to his moral creatures, or of dispensation or action toward them, which may be figuratively delineated, as is sometimes done in Scripture, in such strong terms as almost to imply mutability in his disposition as well as being. The expression of his love may change, and that love may even assume the aspect of holy wrath; his justice may reveal itself at one time in the condemnation of sinners, and at another in their pardon and restoration to himself through grace; his government may be manifested, now in beneficent and sustaining providences, and now in storm and pestilence and retributive visitation. Lactantius (De Ira Dei) has justly argued that if God did not abhor, he could not love; inasmuch as he loves good, he must abhor evil, and must bestow good upon those he loves, evil upon those he abhors. Yet these manifestations however varied indicate no change in either his attributes or his purposes: all his acts of whatever type spring at last from one and the same deep source in his perfect

nature. Increase and improvement, loss and deterioration, vacillation, changeableness in design or act, are to him impossible.

At this point we may fitly gather into one complex conception all that is known respecting God in his constitution or nature, as distinguished from what may be known of him as a being possessing the supreme endowment of character. Intrinsically or constitutionally, God is not a spirit associated with matter or identical with matter, but is pure and simple Spirit, immeasurably above all that is natural or material. He is distinguished from all other spirits as being self-existent,—having no cause or source of existence back of himself. He is also a personal Spirit, and the fontal and creative source of all other existence. He is also an absolute Spirit as distinct from all related being, and as such is in every sense infinite, immeasurable and eternal in his nature, and forever beyond change or mutation of whatever type. These qualities each and all belong to him as Spirit; they inhere in his constitution; they combine to make up his perfect nature, and to differentiate him in essence inconceivably from even the loftiest of his creatures.

7. Moral attributes in God. Knowledge and classification of these attributes.

From this general view of the divine constitution and nature we may now turn to the consideration of the moral attributes of God as described in the Symbols—the perfections which belong to him as a being possessing character. The distinction between God as a Spirit, possessing the constitutional qualities just described, and God as a moral Being, having and manifesting character in its highest conceivable form, and even in a degree immeasurably beyond our loftiest conceptions, is as vital in religious experience as it is familiar in Christian theology. In accordance with it the Shorter Catechism (4) teaches not merely that God is infinite and eternal and unchangeable and therefore perfect in his being, but also that he is equally infinite, eternal and unchangeable and therefore perfect in his wisdom, his power, his holiness, justice, goodness and truth. The Larger Catechism (7) makes the same declaration, in broader form and even with increased emphasis. And in the Confession (Chap. II. and elsewhere) the same high view is affirmed as a necessary inference from what had already been said respecting the divine nature.—Here arises the fundamental question whether God can truly be known by man, not merely as a Spirit in the natural sense, but especially as a moral Being, having in himself such ethical qualities and virtues as the term, character, suggests when applied to him. There is indeed a profound sense in which

he cannot be known, even by the angels and archangels who dwell in his immediate presence. The finite can never comprehend the infinite: God is indeed essentially, as he has been described, the Unknowable One. Yet, though we can know nothing immediately of the divine essence, we may still recognize the ultimate fact that there is in God a substantial ground, an underlying entity or nature, by and in which his revealed perfections are sustained, made coherent, unified. God as a Spirit is something more even than the sum of all his attributes, whether natural or moral: his personality stands eternally behind each manifested quality and supports it. Nor is this an ideal generalization or inference; it must be a reality to our conviction, otherwise our confidence in the actuality of the attributes will inevitably be lost or weakened. Hence the definition of the Catechism brings in the *being* of God as infinite, eternal and unchangeable, before it affirms infinity, eternity and unchangeableness, as belonging to the particular attributes of that being, afterwards named.

God as a personal Being is known primarily through the revelation to us of his substantial attributes, and especially of his moral perfections. It may even be admitted that we truly know him only by this process. What is termed the intuitive perception of God, the direct beholding of him on the surface of consciousness, as we see ourselves reflected there, can hardly be regarded as possible. Yet the belief in his existence may safely be classed among those great primary beliefs, those fundamental convictions of reason and conscience, which lie at the base of all our practical acquaintance with things. We believe spontaneously, primarily, that God exists, and that the constitutional qualities and the moral perfections which are discernible in him, are in like manner real and inherent as well as virtual, although we realize also that as the infinite and unchangeable and absolute Spirit, he rises immeasurably above our highest thoughts, and at best is seen through a glass, darkly. In the familiar phrase of Augustine, we may apprehend though we cannot comprehend him in his nature and in his character. It has been objected that such knowledge as this is not scientific knowledge because it is not complete; and it is urged on philosophic grounds, not only that we do not now know, but even that as finite beings we never can know God in his reality. Yet surely we may apprehend, if we cannot comprehend him: we may learn of him through his revealed and illustrated attributes, though we may not penetrate the mystery of his essence or constitution. If it be said that we cannot even know his attributes fully or comprehensively, yet surely we may know that they

belong to him, and that they are real in themselves, though they are seen to be immeasurably greater than our apprehension of them. We may certainly perceive that they are not merely forms of knowledge, or impressions existing in our minds, rather than inherent and enduring qualities in the divine Being. If we cannot know them fully, we can know them truly. The fact that God loves, or that he is just, or is mighty, may be matter of certain assurance to our minds, though we have no way of measuring his might, or testing absolutely his sense of justice, or fathoming the vast, deep sea of his love.

It should be admitted that the modern doctrine of nescience or agnosticism, whether philosophic or scientific, cannot be met by direct quotations from the creeds of the Reformation. Yet a sufficient answer to these subtle types of false opinion may be found in what is inferentially contained in these formularies. He who duly appreciates their practical and spiritual teachings, will not be likely to be caught in the meshes of such speculative error. The old scholastic problem on which philosophic nescience is based, respecting the incapacity of the finite mind to comprehend the infinite, is practically answered by the simple distinction already suggested, between comprehensive knowledge of divine things, and real knowledge that is not comprehensive. The scientific objection that God cannot be known, unless he can be known through the principles and methods of physical research—an objection to which the creeds give no answer, because it could not have arisen in the era in which they were framed—may be answered, not by remanding the whole matter to the sphere of sentiment or faith, but by broadening the definition of science, and by showing that the physical sciences themselves rest on certain philosophic axioms, fundamental verities of the same nature intellectually as the conception of God. Further answer to both of these varieties of skepticism may be found in a careful analysis of their underlying temper and tendencies, especially within the sphere of ethical and spiritual experience. And we may justly conclude that, in whatever form, mere agnosticism can never command the cordial or the permanent assent of mankind: the human mind spontaneously shrinks from it, as men draw back involuntarily from the edge of a precipice.

It should be noted here that the Symbols attempt no philosophic classification of the divine attributes and perfections: they give us rather, as in the Shorter Catechism, a simple series in which there is an obvious gradation in statement, and in which the glories of the divine character rather than the qualities of the divine

constitution are specially prominent. The transition apparent in their definition is a gradual transition from what is natural to what is moral,—infinity, eternity, unchangeableness in being, furnishing the basis for the consequent declaration of wisdom and power, and of the still more distinctively moral qualities such as justice and goodness and truth, which belong to God as a holy and perfect Person. It should also be noted that they continually lay the supreme stress on the spiritual perfections in God,—doubtless for the reason that it is through the disclosure of these rather than through the manifestation of his constitutional qualities, such as personality or infinitude or unchangeableness, that sinful man is to be brought back to him in penitence and devotion. If we knew nothing more of God than the fact that he exists, or than the fact that he exists as pure and fontal and absolute Spirit, it is probable that such knowledge would only impel us farther away from him, as our first parents fled from his presence in the garden which their sin had contaminated. But when we see him in his glory as a moral Being—when we are enabled to discern his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth, as he has graciously chosen to disclose them in the Gospel, we are spontaneously drawn toward him in humility of spirit, in responsive belief and trust, in penitential love and consecration.

8. Wisdom in God: intelligence, knowledge, wisdom, distinctively.

The attribute of wisdom is presented in the Symbols in two aspects; as intelligence, shown in perfect knowledge of all things actual and possible; and as wisdom distinctively, shown in the adaptation of means to ends, and of all specific ends to the one supreme end, the divine glory. Turning here to the first of these aspects, we find the complete, perfect intelligence of God set forth rather as a natural than a moral endowment, belonging essentially to him as pure and eternal Spirit. This intelligence is set over against all pantheistic notions, modern or ancient, of an unconscious impersonal entity, either pervading all things as an indwelling force, or brooding over all things as a sleeping spirit. In the chapter under special notice, it is affirmed, not merely that God works all things according to the counsel, and of course the conscious counsel of his own will, but also that *in his sight all things are open and manifest*, and that his knowledge is *infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature.* In the chapter on the Eternal Decree (III) it is taught that God *knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions.* He is again and again characterized as *most wise*, as having *infallible foreknowledge*, as

knowing all things, as holding *secret counsel with himself* in regard to man;—phrases which are alike descriptive of an intelligence that includes within its grasp not only all that is, but all that might possibly come to pass.

The characteristics of such intelligence are sufficiently suggested in these descriptions. It is intuitive, in the sense that it comes into the divine mind through no prolonged processes of investigation or reflection, but is seen at once, immediately. It is synchronous, in the sense that the divine mind does not pass discursively from one truth to another, or know things only in their chronologic succession and relation, but rather takes in all truth and things in one comprehensive glance. It is exact and definite,—corresponding entirely to the reality of things, above the range of all confusion or vagueness, independent of image or illustration, crystalline and perfect in the clearness of its vision. It is complete, in the further sense that nothing escapes or ever can escape such comprehending survey; nothing is to it contingent or uncertain; nothing can occur which is not known beforehand alike in its principle, its origin, and its results immediate and remote. This intelligence also includes the possible as well as the actual—the things prevented or not done, as well as the things permitted or ordained. It embraces the whole universe of fact, being, principle, doctrine, possibility; it sweeps at once through the past, the present, the future, and in its light the remotest ages of eternity appear as immediate. Nor was this knowledge ever less, nor will it ever be greater than it is now: being perfect it is incapable of either increase or diminution. Of its processes, of its intensity or of its scope, man can know little; it is too wonderful for us; in its presence we can but tremble and adore.

The doctrine of the absolute omniscience of God will present itself again and again for consideration, especially in its relations to the divine decrees or purposes, and to the divine administration in providence and in grace. Yet it is important that such omniscience should be fully recognized at this point, as the underlying base of the more distinctively moral quality of wisdom. The fact may be inferred alike from the nature of God as Spirit, and from the specific fact of the divine eternity and infinity or omnipresence. It cannot be denied without impugning the divine perfection at many vital points. It is especially important to note that from the necessity of the case such knowledge must include man as truly as physical nature, and the future as well as past choices and acts of men, and also the entire development of the

character and destinies of the race, not merely in this life but forever. All objects and events, future as well as past or present, must be included in it. Nor is this a scientia media, subject to contingencies which are determinable by man: it is direct and immediate, and wholly above all human contingency in its insight and its sweep. In the phrase of another, God sees all things in and through himself; and since he knows himself at once and completely, it is evident that he knows all things in himself at once and perfectly: however things are multiplied or lessened, his knowledge of them is forever complete and unchangeable. Such is invariably the biblical delineation of the divine omniscience; and though it be too wonderful for us or wholly inscrutable in the perplexing problems it suggests, we are never at liberty to question it: we can only bow down before it and submit ourselves in deed and thought to its infallible scrutiny.

The term, wisdom, is more often applied in the Symbols, as in the Scriptures, specifically to the moral developments and activities of this perfect intelligence. In ordinary life, wisdom is displayed both in the selection of right or righteous ends, and in the choice and use of right means for the attaining of such ends. It involves always the exercise of a judgment which is both actuated by worthy motives, and determined by sound principles in its practical decisions. As applied to God, the term contemplates both the one final end toward which he is ever moving, and the particular ends he seeks in given cases, in subordination to that ultimate purpose. It contemplates also the use of none but appropriate and just means, and such use or application of these as shall effect the end contemplated. The sphere of such wisdom is as comprehensive as the universe. It is seen in the plan of creation and in the execution of that plan in all of its details: it is manifested in the complex and manifold developments of providence, from the most minute event in the life of any creature up to the most significant movements of races or of planets: it is specially manifest in the arranging, unfolding, progress and completion of the scheme of redemption. These higher aspects of this attribute are especially emphasized in the Confession. The *unsearchable wisdom*, as well as the power and goodness of God, is said to *manifest itself in his providence*, extending to all things and ordering and governing all for *his own holy ends*. The *wise and holy counsel* of God is asserted even in his permission of sin, and particularly in his having *purposed to order it to his own glory*. The plan of salvation is said to originate as much in the wisdom and purpose of God as in his grace; and the

unfolding of that plan historically is viewed as a manifestation throughout of the same purpose and wisdom. Even the divine consent to the existence and ravages of the dire evil of sin is not regarded as derogating from the cardinal truth that God is most wise—most wise, first in the *permission* and then in his *most powerful bounding* of sin in a *manifold dispensation*, so as to secure his own holy ends therein. The divine sovereignty, as taught in the Symbols, can have no sufficient basis except in the recognition of such wisdom as planning, directing, controlling all things. And it is ever to be remembered that the conception of that sovereignty, so often misapprehended as it is there presented, is always set forth in the light of these antecedent and justifying views of the perfect intelligence, the complete moral wisdom of the Deity.

9. Power in God: God as cause and as will: His sovereignty.

In expounding the associated conception of power as an attribute of God, three relative forms of the doctrine seem to have been present in the minds of the Assembly: God as cause, God as will, God as sovereign.—The doctrine that God is both the first cause and the final cause, originating everything by his own interior causative force, and again utilizing every thing for his own purpose and glory, is clearly maintained in the Symbols in many ways. Such causal efficiency is said to lie in his nature as pure and absolute Spirit,—all power belonging to him inherently. In considering their doctrine respecting divine providence, we shall have occasion to note more distinctly the relations of this primary potency to all varieties of secondary causation. But even here it should be noted that all such secondary causation must have originated in and through the first cause; and that secondary causation cannot act so as to secure results independently of this first, originating cause. Whatever theory may be entertained respecting the nature of this connection, or the manner in which God acts in and with and through second causes, there can be no question as to the fact. To deny that secondary causes have any efficiency, or to affirm that there are no such causes, is to resolve the whole universe simply into one grand, progressive, stupendous movement of the divine will. To suppose that there are such causes in the universe which God did not institute and which he does not control, is to confess that he has no real government over nature or over man, and that the final outcome of things may be something wholly different from his original plan or desire. The Confession (V) teaches rather that he ordereth all things *to fall out according to the nature of second causes;* and that back of all these

subsidiary agencies, he himself *doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all.*

The conception of God as will presents the same fact in a broader form. It lies in his nature as Spirit that he should possess such power of volition: this power is a central element in the idea of Spirit. God is cause, first and final, because he is also will, in the most vital sense. He puts forth his almighty energies, pouring them into each secondary force, and filling the universe with their amazing manifestations, because he wills—because he chooses. His almightiness is the expression of his inward capacity of volition: he is omnipotent, because he is Spirit, pure, free, absolute. Without entering here into any analysis of the various exercises of the divine will, as decretive, preceptive or permissive, or inquiring as to the secret of its measureless efficieney, we may note the primary fact that God is will,—*his own immutable and most righteous will* being the direct outgrowth and expression of his spirituality. Thus creation occurs because *it pleased him:* the multiform developments of providence are referred to the *free and immutable counsel of his will:* the plan of salvation, with all implied or contained in it, (VII) *he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.* Such language runs almost everywhere through the Symbols, indicating constantly the strength of the conception as one of the dominating elements in the system of doctrine there contained.

Without specially considering just here the doctrine of the divine sovereignty as found in the Symbols, we may simply note the fact that such sovereignty is constantly assumed in them, as a consequence of the foregoing view of God as cause and God as will. Being thus both cause and will, God must be sovereign, and that in the highest sense conceivable. Granting the possibility of widely differing notions respecting that sovereignty in its method and scope;—granting also the existence of great practical difficulties in respect to the relations of such sovereignty to human freedom and responsibility, the fact must still be admitted as unquestionable and fundamental. God is *the supreme Lord and King of all the world;*—not merely of the world of humanity, as the phrase implies in the connection in which it is used, but of all worlds, with all their creatures and contents, forever. Such supremacy is an ultimate fact. It is everywhere taught in the Scriptures, as it is everywhere suggested in nature and in the life of man. How this supremacy is exercised in the material universe, and especially as related to the free will and consequent accountability of man, is a problem to be carefully considered at a later stage in our exposition.

While Protestant symbolism can hardly be said to present any theory of the divine omnipotence in either of these three aspects, yet it is strongly unanimous in affirming the essential fact. That God is the first and the executive and the final cause of all things and all events, and that his will is everywhere present and everywhere supreme, and this in such sense as makes him absolute sovereign over nature and over man, is to some extent affirmed, and is universally assumed in these formularies. Even the Arminian Remonstrance (IV) recognizes this divine potency as the beginning, continuance and accomplishment of all good in the domain of grace, and by consequence in the sphere of nature and of providence also. But as in many other directions so here, the Westminster statements are more full and more explicit than any others—though adhering carefully to the wise rule of stating the fact without attempting speculative explanation. The term, *power*, as employed in both the Confession and the Catechisms is a very broad term. We find its closest analogue, not in the forces of nature, tremendous and resistless as these often are, but rather in the human will as an energy of a higher order than any force of nature, and capable of producing results which no natural force can effect. As applied to God, it signifies not only the ability to will, but the ability to execute whatever he wills to do. It does not relate to what may be described as natural impossibilities, but only to what may properly be regarded as legitimate objects of power. The scholastic speculation whether there are any limits to the divine potency,—whether God can undo that which has been done,—whether he can make anything better than he has actually made, and other similar queries, need no specific notice here. Nor does the term refer to moral impossibility in whatever form. God, it is said, (V: iv) being most holy and righteous, *neither is nor can be the author* or approver of sin; and Holy Scripture teaches that he cannot lie, or in any way deceive the children of men, or deny himself, or abdicate his throne of glory. But whatever comes within the scope of holy power, controlled by infinite wisdom and equity and love, he not only knows and desires but is able to accomplish. This is the proper conception of omnipotence as an attribute of God both natural and moral. Such omnipotence is a fact beyond all question. It is implied in what we know him to be as pure and absolute Spirit: it is proved and certified by what we know of the actual workings of such power in the sphere of nature and in human life: it is abundantly declared and established in the inspired Word. Of the instant and the vast and the complete and immeasurable sweep of this divine

potency,—of its irresistible efficiency either through means, or *without, above and against means* as it pleaseth God,—of its inexhaustible volume and its ineffable grandeur, as seen alike in the ordering of the starry heavens and in his moral administration over man and over other rational and moral beings, it is impossible for us to form more than an approximate conception.

10. Other moral Attributes: Justice, Goodness, Truth.

Beside the two primal perfections of God expressed in the terms, wisdom and power, the Westminster teaching brings prominently into view three other moral or spiritual qualities in God,—justice, goodness, truth—which may here be considered together. Of those the first is *justice*. While there are few indices in the Symbols of those philosophic distinctions respecting the divine justice, which have figured so largely in theology during the past two centuries, especally in connection with theories of the atonement, we may note the frequent presence in them of the scholastic antithesis between justitia interna and justitia externa: God being represented habitually as both righteous in himself, and righteous throughout his entire administration. He is first of all righteous in himself or internally,—controlled in his own interior life as truly as in his outward activities by the most absolute and unvarying regard for what he sees to be right. God is not only just—he is justice itself as truly as, in the terse phrase of John, he is love. He is represented as *most just*, and as studying always the claims of absolute justice in the purpose to create, and in all his subsequent plans and determinations. This attribute is never resolved into simple regard for the welfare of his creatures, or into any other kindred characteristic: it is described as an inherent endowment, resident in him as pure and free and absolute Spirit. In this sense, it has sometimes been regarded as synonymous with moral excellence in general, or with holiness or worthiness, taken as descriptive of the complete perfection of Deity. Yet the term more properly has reference distinctively to the intrinsic equity of God in his moral relations to his creatures: it describes the state of mind and will with which he habitually contemplates these relations. His interior desire, his inward and eternal purpose, is to do right always and everywhere. Nor is it ever to be assumed that the right is determined in the divine mind by the mere will of God as an arbitrary matter. While there are instances in the divine legislation, such as the authoritative setting apart of exactly one seventh of human life for worship, which seem to rest directly upon the divine choice alone, yet even such legislation

is not to be viewed as in any sense arbitrary. The law which God imposes upon his moral creatures and to which—it may be reverently said—he is himself eternally and internally obedient, is the expression of his infinite wisdom, goodness, holiness, justice and truth, as well as his sovereign power.

Viewed on the other side as an active quality pouring its influence into all forms of the divine agency in these outward relations, justice is as fully affirmed of God as either power or wisdom. In his primary decree, in his plan and process of creation, in his dealing with man both before the fall, in the fall and subsequently, he is described as most just. His creation and support of angels, and his establishing them in holiness and happiness, are in order that (L. C. 19) he may employ them *in the administration of his power, mercy and justice.* His dealings with men in providence, whatever be the nature of such providence specifically, are said to be *to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power and justice.* In the chapter on Justification, (XI) *the exact justice* of God is said to be, equally with his rich grace, glorified in the justification of sinners. The condemnation of such as have rejected the Gospel, the dishonor and wrath brought upon them on account of their sin, are said to redound *to the praise of his glorious justice.* And in the chapter on the Judgment, (XXXIII), one of the ends sought in the appointing of that awful day is declared to be the manifesting of *the glory of his justice*, both in the rewarding of the righteous, and in the damnation of those who are wicked and disobedient. Whatever objections may be raised at other points against what is said respecting the divine purposes and dealing, there can be no doubt that the Westminster Assembly held strictly, uncompromisingly, to the doctrine that God is just—just inherently and just in every manifestation. Could it be shown that their conception of the divine decrees, or of the scheme of redemption, involved—as has sometimes been said—an actual infraction of the claims of absolute equity, we must still give them credit for honest faith in such equity, and regard them as having failed simply to carry the truth they held, out to its legitimate results.

The distinction just suggested between internal and external justice is sometimes expressed by the terms, absolute and relative,—the first referring to the essential rectitude of the divine character, and the second to the equally essential rectitude of the divine dealings with the human race. Other terms, such as rectoral or legislative, distributive and retributive, governmental or commutative, are used in later theology—as we shall see—to

describe certain specific relations, general or particular, which God as Moral Governor sustains toward men,--the last especially in conjunction with the scheme of redemption through the mediation of Christ. At this point it is important only to emphasize the underlying truth that God is intrinsically and forever just, both in his disposition toward his moral creatures and in all his administration over them. Some of the questions springing up in the presence of this doctrine, especially those in connection with the permitting of sin and the disciplinary and retributive dealing of God with sinners, can best be considered at a later stage. The doctrine cannot, however, be too strenuously emphasized in an age like this, when the attribute of justice is so frequently merged and lost in the correlative conception of love,—when the divine Fatherhood is set in unnatural antithesis with the conception of God as Moral Governor; when it is broadly assumed that he is too good to punish or even to require faith and obedience from his sinful and rebellious creatures, and when his holy law with all its solemn requisitions and warnings is so frequently set aside as if it were an obsolete or at least an insignificant code and rule of life. In the presence of such errors far too current, which are not only blunting and impairing the religious sense, but corrupting the morals of the age, it is imperative that the voice of Scripture and the consonant voice of reason and conscience respecting the infinite, eternal, unchangeable justice of God should be most earnestly and constantly proclaimed as one of the cardinal elements in our holy Faith. For a type of Christianity which is not true to the justice of God, will soon prove itself untrue to his love, his grace, his holiness also, and will ultimately cease altogether to be the Christianity of the inspired Word.

The almost invariable association of the attribute of goodness with that of justice in the Symbols is a strong confirmation on this point. The justice there affirmed is a quality which harmonizes intrinsically with the purest benevolence, the completest mercy and grace in the divine mind. Much of the objection to the Calvinistic scheme, drawn from views of the divine benevolence, although they perchance may be justified partly by what is found in the writings of representative Calvinists, can hardly lie against that scheme as presented in the Symbols themselves. For, while God is always represented as just, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, he is described in the same connection, (II : ii) as *most loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth*:—phrases which are certainly to be taken into full

account in the interpretation of the language just preceding them in the same chapter. His counsel there, and indeed everywhere in both Confession and Catechisms, is declared to be most loving; his will, though most righteous, is also most gracious; his immutable purpose is one which reveals his abundance in goodness and truth, as well as his changeless equity.

The term, *goodness*, as generally employed, refers but incidentally to the moral excellence inherent in God, though he is always described as in himself good; it refers rather to his exhibitions of fatherly feeling toward his moral creatures in their various conditions and needs. God is good toward the angels who have not left their first estate, and to the redeemed who are assembled with him in glory,—his love complacently viewing them in their holy condition, and rejoicing over them in the peculiar felicities of their perfect estate. God is good in his providence; governing *all creatures, actions and things* by his most wise and holy methods, in the temper of *goodness and mercy*—having paternal regard to every need, and ministering most tenderly even to the unthankful and the evil. God is eminently good in his gracious plan of redemption; providing that plan under the impulses of a love which embraced the world; unfolding and applying it in the same fatherly interest, and including within its blessed issues all who could be brought to know and accept it. God is good also in his dealing, not merely with those who are incapable of being outwardly called by the word of grace, but even with such as reject the offered salvation,—bearing long with their indifference, struggling by his Spirit with their willful opposition, and consigning them at last, not in the high temper of insulted majesty alone, but most pitifully, to the fate which their unworthiness and guilt have merited. While there are phrases in the Confession which express a severer view of God, and while much in the theology of the age in which it was compiled, and in that of the century following, was dictated in the more forbidding method too characteristic of Calvin himself, yet the broader view of the divine goodness just suggested will be recognized in all candid interpretations of the Symbols, not merely as an occasional but rather as a central, if not predominating characteristic.

It is not out of place to remark in passing, that much of the criticism of Calvin based on his severities both of view and of expression, would be essentially modified by a more careful study of his earnest teaching respecting the benevolence and mercy of God, and his correspondent inculcation of the obligation of mankind to be loving and merciful. The tender nature of the man

whose house was always the hospitable home of persecuted refugees, and of the widows and orphans of those who had suffered in the Protestant cause, and who when dying gave instruction that no monument should be erected over his remains, but that the few possessions he had should be given rather to the poor of Geneva, deserves worthier consideration at the hands of those who denounce him as a narrow and merciless bigot. Even amid the rigid logic, and the forbidding statements of doctrine, and the stern and solemn denunciations, one may find in his Institutes many a sentence which breathes forth the most earnest faith in the divine love and mercy, and the most benevolent interest in our lost race. Against papal errorists, against vain and false philosophers, against willful skeptics and unbelievers, Calvin was always unsparing in his condemnation; but for mankind as sinful and perishing, his great soul overflowed always with a compassion born of heaven. It is not strange that the skeptic Renan, while criticising his theology, should characterize him as the most Christian man of his generation.

Calvinism itself, viewed broadly and fairly, is like its great expounder in this regard. It always contemplates justice as a primal quality in God, and goodness as forever conditioned by justice. It cannot for a moment consent to the suggestion that God ever has done or ever can do an unrighteous act toward any of his creatures. It cannot for an instant presume that the divine love, perfect and glorious as it is, will ever induce God to be indifferent to the claims of equity, even in the disciplining or the condemnation of those who violate his most holy law. It plants itself upon the impregnable rock of the divine sovereignty, and declares that in the exercise of that sovereignty, God must ever be regarded as just, though every man be a liar. Nor does it hesitate to say that all teaching which exalts the love of God at the expense of the divine equity, is to be viewed as dangerous, if it be not blasphemous heresy. Yet certainly no section of Protestantism has ever been more constant, more earnest, more tender or joyous in its exposition of divine mercy toward sinners or of the wondrous grace that saves. A thousand illustrations of this fact might be gathered from the writings of conspicuous Calvinists in other ages, and eminently in our own. That in this respect valuable melioration of the earlier Calvinism has been secured in this age, and is still in progress, is an unquestionable and a happy fact. But such change has involved no departure from the fundamental truth of the system, that God is forever just, supremely and altogether just, in the exercise of his rightful

ful sovereignty; nor is to be anticipated that at this fundamental point Calvinism will ever forswear itself.

Of the truthfulness of God in every aspect, both inherent and transitive or relative, we find here the strongest possible affirmation. He is described as infinitely, eternally and unchangeably true—*the living and true God.* The authority of the Scripture is said (I: iv) to rest, not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God, *who is truth itself;* and all the teachings of that revelation have therefore the same quality. It was for the better preserving and propagating *of the truth*, that this revelation was committed unto writing: and this revelation is therefore to be read by us *with a firm persuasion that it is the very Word of God*, and is consequently an infallible instructor in all things pertaining to duty and to salvation. So God is said to be true in his providence; the lessons of that providence being faithful witnesses to the reality of things, and reliable guides to trust and hope in him. He is especially declared to be true in the disclosures of the Gospel;—its doctrines being so infinitely worthy of trust, its promises and threatenings so certain to be verified, that it is the immediate duty of every sinner to *assent to the truth* of this Gospel, and implicitly to receive and rest upon Christ and his righteousness. The infallible assurance of faith which believers are invited to attain, is said to be *founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation.* In himself, therefore, and in all his dealings both providential and gracious, God is the living and true God; never mistaking in his knowledge, never misled through any influence, discerning at one glance and completely all things in every sphere; adhering always to his most holy Word, verifying his promises, faithful to his warnings, and forever and forever the Truth.

It is obvious that this quality sustains the same relation to the other moral attributes in God, which spirituality sustains to his natural qualities. It belongs to him as pure Spirit, free and absolute, to be truthful in every utterance and act. As intelligent Spirit, he must know intuitively all things exactly as they are: to him blindness, mistake, illusion, are forever impossible. As perfect Spirit, he can never deceive or mislead; however dark his sayings or impenetrable the mystery of his acts, no error or fraud can possibly attach to them. As Sovereign over his moral creatures, vitally interested in their education and their ultimate preparation for an eternity of holy companionship and blessedness, he has the highest motive in leading them into sure, stable, infallible knowledge, especially of all spiritual things. And he has

given the highest evidence of his interest in such training by the gift of his Spirit whose special mission it is, in part, to lead holy souls *into all the truth*. Truthfulness is therefore directly associated with goodness and with justice, as one among the crowning perfections of the Deity. God makes nothing true through his simple statement of it by will or by decree; the sources of truth are to be found rather in the lofty infinitudes of his perfect moral nature. He utters what is true because first of all in his omniscience he discerns and knows it to be truth, and in his equity and his goodness seeks to make it known to his moral creatures. If God were not thus intrinsically truthful, he could not be regarded as good; if he were not thus truthful, we could have no adequate guarantee for reliance on him as just. What faith, hope and charity are in man as sanctified, truth and justice and mercy are in God,—the three supreme virtues which mark him as perfect, and which fully substantiate his claim to universal love, trust, devotion.

11. Holiness in God: His moral perfection: General view.

The term holiness as applied to God in the Symbols, signifies not simply inward purity as to specific thoughts or impulses, but also spiritual excellency in general: it is a consummating term, descriptive of what he is in his perfection, and as the appropriate center of all human, all angelic adoration. It doubtless refers in part to that interior moral beauty and freedom from all defect or blemish, that unsullied glory and grace, which are resident in the divine Being, and which lead angels and archangels in their highest ecstacy to prostrate themselves in ceaseless worship before the penetrating radiance of his presence. It refers also in part to that intrinsic sense of worthiness, that serene contemplation or recognition of himself as flawless and complete, which must stand behind all his activities, especially in his moral administration. But comprehensively, the term includes all personal and spiritual excellence of whatever type exhibited in God—that combination of infinitude and eternity and unchangeableness with wisdom and power, with justice and goodness and truth, which makes him the glorious as he is the absolute God, and which lifts him up forever as the supreme object of all trust and devotion. It is more than a state of the divine will, as forever fixed upon what is right and good; it is more than justice and benevolence, regarded as attributes in the divine character; it is that character itself in all its inconceivable elevation, and its absolute flawlessness and sanctity. Charnock, (Divine Attributes) declares that this holiness has an excellency

above all the other perfections of Deity, and refers in proof to the threefold ascriptions of praise frequently recurring in the Scriptures; Holy, Holy, Holy! So God is habitually represented in the Symbols;—a Being *having no sin*, and infinitely hostile to all sin, ever perfect in himself; *most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands;* most holy as well as wise and good in his decrees and in his providences, even when dealing with the wicked: and most of all, infinitely holy in his plan of grace, and in his spiritual ministries to men for their salvation. His ministering Spirit is called eminently the Holy Spirit, both as being intrinsically holy, and the source and cause of all holiness in us: his Word is styled the Holy Word; and all the activities of his grace, from our effectual calling to our complete sanctification, are designed to bring us into the practice of that *true holiness* without which no man shall see the Lord.

Schleiermacher defines holiness in a special sense as that divine perfection by which, when it is brought into correlation with the life and character of man, the conscience is made to feel the necessity of redemption. The statement brings into view the supreme object of God in the revelation of himself as the Holy One. That revelation assumes a variety of forms. We see it in the divine law as designed to bring men into the consciousness of their guilt as unholy, and of their need of purifying grace. We see it in the Gospel as a divine scheme fitted to educate and train and inspire those who receive it in the practice of true holiness. We see it in the feeling of God toward sin, and in his purpose to punish sin, wherever his grace is found to be ineffectual in its removal. We see it shining out in more winning aspects in all those beauties of nature, flowers and fountains and stars, which are ever suggesting a type of purity higher than can be found in man. We also see it reflected in the moral feeling and conviction of mankind, and in all those aspirations after holiness which have expressed themselves, sometimes in most painful as well as in beautiful forms, in the life and history of the race. But the one end in all these disclosures is, in the phrase of Schleiermacher, to bring men to realize their need of redemption, and then to lead them through the nurture of the Holy Ghost and of the Holy Word, into a type of moral experience which shall ultimately make them holy even as God is holy.

It is hardly practicable here to refer to the objections urged against this conception of the moral excellence, the spiritual completeness of God,—objections drawn from his decrees or his providence, or from his dealings with men under the Gospel. The

manner in which such objections are met in the Symbols will better be considered in conjunction with their exposition of these particular doctrines. Yet it is important at this stage to note the philosophic breadth and power, the spiritual elevation, the majesty and persuasiveness of the view of the Deity here brought before us. Traditional as is the story that the definition of God presented in the Shorter Catechism was first uttered in prayer, and was spontaneously appropriated by the Assembly as accurately expressing the essential truth in the case, there can be no question that this definition is one of the sublimest and completest ever uttered. Compared with like definitions in other Protestant creeds it shines out like some bright planet in the sky, filling the whole firmament of theology with its luster. Criticism has sometimes seized upon the strong statements in the Symbols concerning the divine foreknowledge or power or justice or majesty, as if they conveyed too cold and forbidding a view of the Almighty. But certainly they do not go beyond what the Word of God has plainly affirmed: they rather condense and crystallize its teachings into clear, imperishable doctrine, such as neither the understanding nor the heart can well reject. Moreover it should be constantly remembered that all the most tender and benignant traits in God, the most winning aspects of the divine nature and character, are here blended indissolubly with these sterner qualities, and are to be received as making up, together with these, the one composite, harmonious, symmetrical and scriptural conception. Justice has rarely been done to this side of the Westminster formularies. The mountain summits of spiritual thought, the deep and dark abysses, which they bring to view, are in themselves real, and those who ignore them can never attain the clearest and most impressive conceptions of Him within whose nature such heights and depths are surely contained. Yet on these summits and along the sides of these abysses, the sunlight of divine love is ever shining, and flowers of tenderness and grace are springing, and the verdure and beauty of an immaculate holiness are to be seen. Infinite and eternal and unchangeable as God is declared to be in his sovereignty and justice, and in the severer aspects of his dealing with men, he is declared to be no less infinite and unchangeable and everlasting in his benevolence, his providence, his grace—his holiness.

A careful comparison with the other Protestant creeds must lead the student to a fresh sense of the remarkable comprehensiveness and dignity of the general conception of God and his attributes, as thus presented in the Westminster formularies. It

has been urged with some significance that the Lutheran Confessions, and some Reformed creeds such as the Heidelberg Catechism, have succeeded in bringing out into better light the more benignant and winning aspects of the divine character and relations to men. It may be true that some other types of theology have been more successful in setting forth the Christological idea, in contrast with the Calvinistic view of paternal sovereignty as standing behind the incarnation and work of Christ, and thus have softened somewhat the severe impressions and experiences which the doctrine of sovereignty, where strongly held, has sometimes produced. But let it not be forgotten that the boundless tenderness and grace seen in the Redeemer are only the incarnate manifestations of the divine power, wisdom, love, which from the first embraced the world and provided for it the plan of redemption. Nor let it be forgotten that the great grace of the Gospel derives its winning appearance, its wondrous beauty and attractiveness, largely from the darker background of might and equity and supreme majesty, on whose solemn surface it is revealed to men. And it is in the skillful and honest blending of these antithetic views of God that the theology of Westminster exhibits alike its fine proportions and its peculiar massiveness. The men who composed it were not insensible to the attractions of Jesus, to the ineffable tenderness of his mission, or to the amazing power of his love to win and save the lost. But they were also men who lived in solemn times, who had great battles to fight, and to whom it was a measureless comfort to know always that God is, and that he rules in infinite majesty and with unfailing purpose over all.

12. Trinity in God: The underlying ground in the divine Unity: Unity defined.

From this survey of the divine attributes and perfections, we may pass to the consideration of the great doctrine associated with this conception of God in the chapter specially under examination,—the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The sum of the doctrine is contained in the words: *In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.* In the succeeding sentence the properties peculiar to each of the three persons are described; and in the chapter on the Covenant with Man (VII) the relations of these persons are at least partially indicated. Again in chapter VIII, on Christ the Mediator, the second person in this holy Trinity is particularly described with respect to his divine constitution

and relations, and also to his full and true humanity. The two Catechisms simply repeat in briefer form, and with but slight variation from each other, what is thus set forth in the Confession. Gathering up in addition to these statements such incidental references as are scattered elsewhere through the Symbols, we may easily find material for an accurate construction of the doctrine as held by the Assembly.

At the outset of such construction, the true, substantial, eternal unity of the Godhead must be recognized as the underlying ground or basis on which the biblical conception of the Trinity is to be reared. This unity has already been considered in part as one essential characteristic of God, contemplated as pure and personal Spirit, but needs further examination at this point. God is thus one, not in any merely moral or social sense, as if the three persons in the Godhead were three beings simply agreeing together in thought or feeling or purpose; nor merely in the sense of similarity or likeness consequent upon the possession of a common nature,—as the human race becomes a unit by virtue of a common origin or the heritage of one type of life; but in the deepest and truest sense possible for us to conceive. In essence or substance or nature, God is one Being—indivisibly, internally and eternally one, as absolute perfection must of necessity be. To this great primary fact, abundantly taught in the earliest periods and phases of revelation, and everywhere made fundamental in the Scriptures, all conceptions of the Trinity must from the nature of the case be subordinated;—with this fact all descriptions of the threefoldness of personality, or the three modes of existence in God, must harmonize. The biblical and rational grounds on which this primal truth rests have already been sufficiently stated by way of contrast with all types of polytheism. The united witness of the Christian creeds, and the firm faith of the church universal on this point, have also been recited. It is not too much to say that the truth is indeed axiomatic in the estimate of all who have gained any adequate conception of God as a Being, and as such is to be emphasized here and everywhere in Christian theology as fundamental.

Yet it is important to note also that this underlying unity is in some respects unique: it is not a homeogeneous singleness merely, but an inconceivable and an immeasurable oneness, as far above our apprehension as God himself is higher than man. In fact, unity of being in God as to its nature and qualities, is hardly less mysterious than are his triune modes of being: Cunningham, Hist. Theol.: Vol. II. Revealing himself to our vision as the one and

only cause, whether primal or efficient or final; as the one and only Father and Governor in providence and in moral administration, and as the one and only object of our faith and allegiance and devotion, his essential unity must still be regarded as something inexpressibly deeper and grander than any merely numerical oneness would be. Lessing styles it a transcendental unity which does not exclude plurality. A certain manifoldness is suggested by the conception, whenever with our feeble insight we seek to apprehend it. As a flower, to use the illustration of Luther, is one in nature but distinguishable as triune in form and fragrance and medicinal value,—as any single object in the physical world reveals triplicity in shape and magnitude and color,—as the white light of day is divisible into its three primal or its seven secondary rays,—as there are three distinct forces, the creative the preservative and the destructive, in the one system of nature, —as the one sun displays itself alike in heat, radiance, fructifying energy and the force of gravitation,—as man himself, though one, may be contemplated in several distinct relations, or may be analyzed both physically and mentally into a triple series of constituents, separable in thought though not in fact, so we may discern in the unity of God a manifoldness which is but faintly symbolized in such illustrations—a certain complexity and multiplicity of being, existing in conjunction with this primal oneness, such as it is impossible for any creature to attain or even to conceive. All such illustrations at the best are but finite and earthly: God is one in a sense in which oneness cannot be affirmed of any finite object. It has been tersely said of him, that he is not a natural but a trinal unit. Augustine claims (Civ. Dei. XI.) that, as being nearer to God in nature than any other of his works, and destined to be brought still nearer by grace, we may see in ourselves as spiritual existences a blending oneness and threeness of being which may properly suggest to us the presence in God of a type of unity, in an infinitely higher degree blended with triplicity or multiplicity, such as no mortal or angel can experience or apprehend. We both are, he says in a remarkable passage which Hamilton has placed by the side of the famous axiom of Descartes,—we both are, and we know that we are, and we delight both in our being, and in our knowledge that we are. And if, as Augustine thus teaches, we though single and simple in essence, are thus manifold to our own narrow comprehension, how much vaster and more multiplex may be the oneness resident in God.

It has been urged against the Symbols that by their use of the

abstract term, *Godhead*, by their delineation of the personality of Christ as in marked contrast with the Deity in general, and by their description of the work of Christ as set over against the position and claims of God as Sovereign and Father, and in other similar ways, they make tritheistic impressions on the reader, if indeed they do not become inconsistent with themselves, and deny in one connection the unity which they have asserted in another. Such objections lie, not against the formularies of Westminster only, but against the Protestant symbolism generally. That views of the Godhead as in council or covenant, and of the several persons in the Godhead as in antagonism, representing diverse interests and dealing with each other as three beings would in like circumstances, have prevailed too extensively in Protestant theology, cannot be questioned. There are interpretations of Scripture, somewhat current even in our time, which have largely affected the popular mind in the same direction,—leading to essentially erroneous apprehensions of the Father on one side and of the Holy Spirit on the other, while separating God in Christ, or Christ as the Son of God, far too widely from both. To such an extent has this supposed diversity of interests and activities been carried, that in the relative exaltation of the Son, the separate personality of the Spirit has virtually been ignored, while the purpose and feeling of God the Father in redemption have been greatly depreciated. Such tritheism is but a Christian form of polytheism: it leaves the soul to deal in the matter of its salvation with three divine Beings rather than with one: it fails to maintain the essential unity and consequent power of the biblical conception, and thus works irreparable mischief practically where the true doctrine, rightly held, might have brought light and blessing.

Yet the Symbols, following the example of the older Protestant formularies, do certainly affirm most positively the unity, not of the Godhead abstractly, but of God in his being and nature, and in all his attributes and perfections. He is said to exist *in and of himself—alone in and unto himself;* he is described as the *one only living and true God;* in the threeness of the persons, there is said to be but *one substance, power and eternity*. As such, God is said to plan and decree, to create, to preserve and govern in his providence. And while the antithesis between God and the divine Christ as Mediator is pressed out strongly, and in such ways as to produce in some minds the impression of two beings working in a species of antagonism, yet the primary fact of unity clearly flows into and through all these subsequent

expositions of the scheme of grace, and is to be regarded as a regulative principle in the entire construction. It is especially important that this underlying unity should be maintained throughout our analysis of the doctrine of the holy Trinity as presented in the Symbols. It must never be forgotten that God is forever one before he is three; and that no view of the threeness of persons is admissible which does not preserve this oneness as a clear, unquestionable, regulative postulate.

13. The term, Person; its relations to Being: limitations of the term.

The meaning of the symbolic term, *Person*, is not easily defined. When it is said that in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, we can save ourselves from contradiction only by limiting at once the scope or contents of the latter term; asserting at least negatively that we do not thereby mean, being, or its synonym in such words as nature, substance, essence. The Greek term, hypostasis, has sometimes been called into service as a limiting and explaining word; but it is difficult to fix upon that term a meaning that is clear of mystery, or that relieves us altogether from this sense of contradiction. The Latin synonym, subsistence, so often employed by Calvin as a literal translation of hypostasis, deepens instead of lessening the mental difficulty. Nor is the phrase, mode, or mode of existence, now occasionally used, quite adequate, since we need some further description of these separate modes of being, in order to adjust them properly to the primary fact of unity. The more helpful word, person, must however be used in a sense which is confessed to be exceptional: its exact relation to the word, being, must be disavowed, and an antithesis between the two terms be set up, for which there is no close parallel in ordinary usage. The definition of Locke that a person is a thinking, intelligent being that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, in different times and places, is obviously inadmissible here. Similarly, to define each person in the Trinity as an intelligent subject, or as a distinct individual existence having the properties of reason and feeling and free will, must inevitably confuse person with being, substantially as is done in ordinary speech, and so lead on directly to a species of tritheism. To define the term as denoting such a threefold distinction in the one divine nature as connects itself with personal properties and acts and mutual relationships; or, in the phrase of Calvin, as a subsistence in the divine essence which is related to the other subsistences in that essence, and yet is distinguished from them by some incommunicable property, still leaves the

distinction between person and being in a vague, unimpressive and insufficient form. Yet we have no other term which expresses the divine fact any more precisely, nor is there within the scope of our knowledge any other analogue or resemblance or illustration which is any more helpful to our faith; and we consequently rest in the statement of all Christian symbolism that in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons: Hall, Harmony of Prot. Conf., second section.

At this point the Symbols clearly plant themselves, not merely on the antecedent symbolism modern and ancient, but ultimately on the Scripture itself as their justifying ground. The Augsburg Confession, after indorsing the Nicene declaration, and affirming the existence of three persons of the same essence and power, who also are co-eternal, further declares (Art. I.) that the term, person, is used in that signification in which the ecclesiastical writers, the Fathers, have used it in this case, to signify not merely a part or quality in another, but that which properly (peculiarly) subsists in or by itself. The Article evidently attempts to indicate something deeper, more fundamental, than any specific attribute or perfection in God,—something resident somewhere between such attributes and the divine essence or substance, as a special and ineffable mode of being. The Second Helvetic Confession teaches (Cap III) that there are, not three Gods, but three persons, consubstantial, co-eternal and co-equal, —distinct as, or so far as they are, hypostases, and proceeding each in its own order, but without any inquality. Most of the other symbols of the Reformation, including the three antecedent British Confessions, are content with the exposition of the doctrine in briefer forms, while frequently referring to the ancient creeds as furnishing satisfactory statements of the essential fact. The Irish Articles are more full than any other; and their description of the differentiating properties in the three persons undoubtedly furnished the basis of the like explanation in the teachings of Westminster. The fact that in all these formularies there is a marked absence of the verbal and speculative distinctions found in the ancient creeds, especially the Athanasian, probably indicates the existence of doubt as to the scriptural warrant for such refinements, or corresponding doubt as to their practical or spiritual worth. The caution and moderation in statement which so vigorous and bold a thinker as Calvin does not hesitate both to exemplify and commend, are apparent generally in the Protestant symbolism, though less conspicuous in some of the controversial theology of the period.

The proposition of the Westminster Confession is also clearly characterized by close adherence to the Scripture itself, above all teachings and commandments of men. It cannot well be questioned that while the Divine Word declares unequivocally the fundamental truth of the divine unity, it also sets forth with equal earnestness the consequent conception of a trinity resident within that unity, and a trinity which is truly personal,—not a rhetorical representation, or an economic exhibition, with no permanent basis in the divine constitution, but a trinity which in some true sense carries with it a profound and enduring threefoldness of personality, within the boundaries of the one divine substance or nature. The baptismal formula, the apostolic benedictions, the frequent references to the three divine persons as distinct from each other, their asserted union and communion in purpose, in feeling, in activity; and the positive declarations as to the existence and attributes and relations of each considered separately, all conspire to force upon the biblical student the Nicene or Chalcedonian description, reproduced almost literally in the Confession, (VIII : ii) as the only one which in any adequate sense embodies or unifies these varied forms and aspects of the revelation. To this conclusion the Symbols adhere, not as explaining everything, but as covering the Bible teaching essentially, and including all that is indispensable to the truth regarded in its practical aspects and relations.

In the associated clause (II : iii), the points of likeness and unlikeness in these three divine Persons are further described;

14. Differentiating properties: Likeness and unlikeness in the Persons.

—the likeness in the words, *of one substance, power and eternity;* and the unlikeness in the explanatory sentence, *The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.* The phrase, substance, power and eternity, was doubtless intended to cover all the divine attributes, and to assert the equal divinity or deity of the three persons as all possessing such attributes in equal degree. As the whole of the divine essence is in each attribute, in such sense that we can never separate the essence from the attribute, or the attribute from the essence, so the whole of the essence and all of the divine attributes are in each person, in such sense that the several persons incorporate and incorporate alike both every attribute and the sum of the divine essence. Thus Father, Son and Spirit, are alike eternal: infinitude in time, or transcendence above time, is an essential quality of the

Son and the Spirit as truly as of the Father. It follows that the subsequent conception of begetting and proceeding are not to be taken as implying in any sense the beginning of existence on the part of either Son or Spirit. Again: Father, Son and Spirit are alike powerful, though working in different spheres or relations, and sometimes with an economic adjustment or subordination of activities. Yet the second and third persons are equally omnipotent with the first, and their agency is equally original and underived and adequate. And what is true of eternity and of power, is by implication asserted of intelligence and wisdom, and of all other moral as well as natural attributes,—holiness, justice, goodness, truth being resident inherently in each and belonging alike to all. And the ground of this likeness in duration and in potency and perfection is further presented in the word, *substance*, with its equivalents in the two terms, essence and nature. Such affirmation, not of simple likeness in substance but of actual identification, is required by the tenet of the divine unity: as one Being, the three persons must be essentially, substantially unified —one in their inmost nature. Likeness in attributes and modes here changes into oneness; and this oneness is fundamental in the essential Being. The whole is summed up in the words of Stillingfleet: We are assured from Scripture that there are three to whom the divine nature (substance) and attributes are given, and we are assured from Scripture and reason that there can be but one divine essence (substance), and therefore every one of them must have this divine nature, (substance) and yet that nature (essence) can be but One.

In distinguishing the three persons, thus unified by the possession of common attributes and substance, we have no other marks or guides than those revealed in Scripture. What interior differentiation there may have been, or may now be,—what distribution or interchange in thought or consciousness or volition, we can never know. We recognize primarily the triple order of revelation and activity, seen on the one side in the divine Word where the succession of Father and Son and Spirit is so constantly manifest chronologically; and seen on the other side in the specific relations of these persons to the creation, government and salvation of man. The underlying basis of this exterior trinity, the trinity of appearance and administration, is suggested especially in the two mysterious terms, *begetting* and *proceeding*. Whatever else these terms suggest, they at least imply an interior difference, —a difference lying in the constitution of the Deity, and therefore eternal as well as internal. They suggest, in other words, an

immanent and necessary relationship, as well as a relationship of office and function. That the Father begets and the Son is begotten, is a fact so far suggested in the Scriptures that, however perplexing the statement, we may not fully ignore or reject it. We may justly assert that this language does not imply a derived and therefore a dependent existence on the part of the Son: neither may we regard it as including relative subordination or inferiority in nature. This eternal begetting is hardly to be viewed, either, as a continuous act of will on the part of the Father, but rather as a profound process in the divine constitution, yet not an unconscious process but one recognized by the Father and the Son as making them in the deepest sense one and equal. In the chapter on Christ the Mediator, the Son is described as *very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father:* and the declaration of the Shorter Catechism (6) that Father and Son are *the same in substance, equal in power and glory*, conveys the same impression of unity, revealing or verifying itself even through this mysterious process going on within the divine nature, theologically called generation. The Symbols clearly stand here not in Arian ground in any of its varieties, nor on the modern theory of subordinationism, even in its highest form, but on the ancient and catholic doctrine of an equality between Father and Son, which is interior, absolute, everlasting.

In respect to the procession of the Spirit, the same explanation may be made. It is not simply an economic procession, having reference chiefly to the chronological work of salvation,—but one that is inherent and permanent in the divine constitution. The Father, or the Father and the Son, send forth; the Spirit proceeds, and this interiorly, continuously, eternally. Yet the sending does not imply inherent or eternal superiority, nor does the proceeding, or the consenting to go forth in consequence of such sending, imply inferiority in nature or attribute. Respecting the addition of the *Filioque* to the doctrine as originally stated in the Nicene creed, the Confession simply follows the course of the Western church,—induced no doubt by apprehensions of the influence of that form of Arianism which first compelled this addition. Holy Scripture certainly suggests a proceeding from the Father, and also a being sent by the Son in the interest of redemption, and these phrases imply no contradiction or suggestion of two independent sources, but simply illustrate the separate yet coalescent relations of the Father on one hand and the Son on the other to the work of salvation as conducted by the Spirit. In what is said in the Symbols respecting the work of the Spirit

as consequent upon that of the first and second persons, the Son rather than the Father is apparently the more prominent, especially in giving to the Spirit his great commission. The Holy Ghost is said to be his Spirit: souls are said to be saved by Christ through the Spirit: the work of the Spirit everywhere falls in as a direct consequence and issue of what Christ as Mediator has done; and the bestowment of the benefits derivable from his redemption, is said to be especially the work of God, the Holy Ghost. Such association of the third person with the second rather than the first, though a departure from the teaching of the Nicene symbol, is a natural and legitimate result of the fundamental doctrine of Protestantism,—justification by faith. That doctrine, bringing out into greater prominence the mission and offices of the Son, and concentrating thought and faith around the Cross, naturally led to such associated presentation of Him whom the Son has sent to be the Comforter of his chosen, and to guide and edify his church unto the day of his return.

The term *proper*, as applied to these differentiating features or characteristics, denotes simply the proprium—the peculiar something in each, by which each is distinguishable to our apprehension from the rest. It is that which, in the phrase of Augsburg, properly subsists as the ground or basis of each separate personality. As such it is exclusive of the error condemned by the second Helvetic Confession, *quasi Filius et Spiritus Sanctus affectiones et proprietates sint unius Dei Patris*, since the proprium belongs to each, not as an attribute of an attribute, but as the distinguishing characteristic of a Person. Such divisibility in the divine nature is partly expressed in the theological enumeration of the divine persons as First and Second and Third, and still more in the explanatory terms of Scripture, Father and Son and Spirit, viewed not as mere names but as descriptive of both order and relationship and actual existence. Farther than this, as Christian symbolism clearly shows, it is hardly possible for human speech or human thought to reach. The language of the Westminster Confession goes beyond that of most of the continental symbols in its attempt to define such distinctive properties; yet it is far more cautious and more safe than that of the Irish Articles: The essence of the Father doth not beget the essence of the Son, but the person of the Father begetteth the person of the Son, by communicating his whole essence to the person, begotten from eternity. No such statement can be drawn from Scripture, or be justified by any comprehensive view of the Holy Three, as constituting together the one only and true God.

The Symbols thus emphasize the doctrine of an immanent Trinity, existing not through the will but in the constitution of the Deity, and therefore eternal, regarded as an interior fact. Such emphasis is chiefly important as excluding the heretical conception of a modal and transitive trinity only—an economic manifestation of God in time in order to redeem men, but having no existence, except as a divine thought, prior to the introduction of the scheme of salvation through Christ. Not only was the thought of such a manifestation eternally in the mind of God: He was interiorly triune before men existed, and even when he dwelt alone in the vastness of his own eternity. But while this is true as a theologic proposition, the Symbols direct our attention much more fully and frequently to the external trinity, as seen in the divine relations to human life, and particularly to human salvation.

15. The Trinity interior and exterior: Trinity in Redemption.

Viewing here this threefold distribution as practically economic —having reference to the several functions of the Godhead toward all external existence, we may observe that, while we are taught (Ch. IV) that it pleased God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in the beginning to create or make of nothing the world and all things therein, yet elsewhere the doctrine of the divine fatherhood is pressed out, in connection with creation and providence, into such prominence as justifies the recognition of the first Person as specially primal and prominent in these spheres of divine activity. It is true that the whole Deity is more apparent here, the trinitarian distinction being relatively retired; yet even in creation, and still more plainly in providence, it is clearly the Father who comes into the foreground of our vision, making the worlds and ordering all things in the interest of his own benignant and gracious plans for man. The opinion that the Spirit is the executive agent of the Godhead in all spheres, and that it is He who created and gives life to all, and providentially controls all things, is one for which the Symbols furnish no warrant. They do not even lay stress upon the agency of the second Person, as the instrumental cause in creation, or the final cause in providence; but rather refer these processes to the first Person as representing herein the entire Deity. Nor do they represent the fatherhood in God as referring simply to relations established by grace: for while the relation of Creator and creature is made prominent, as in the chapter on the Covenant, (VII) it is by no means implied that this is the only relation, or that man is not by nature a child of God as well as a subject. The description of man as created after the divine image, and endued

with knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, and as existing in a special spiritual relation to God under the covenant of works, implies a fatherhood before the fall; and the description of providence, as wisely and tenderly concerning itself in human affairs after the fall, certainly suggests a continuance of that natural relation, even after man had proved unfilial and undeserving. In like manner, the exposition of the plan of grace as originating, not in the action of the Son, but in the mind of God viewed either as triune or as paternal, implies the existence of parental feeling toward our fallen race,—redemption springing as truly from that source as from the pitying love of the second Person or the sympathetic grace of the third Person in the holy Trinity: Crawford, Fatherhood of God.

This economic distribution of functions in the Godhead becomes still more apparent and impressive, if we contemplate the person and activities of the Son in creation, in government, and especially in the work of redemption. On a cursory glance it is seen that in each of these spheres, but eminently in the last, the exterior trinity becomes a most conspicuous and most blessed fact. In like manner, the mission of the Spirit, as originating in some sense in the direction of the Father and the choice of the Son, brings out this triune economy of offices and works in most impressive light. While we see the Father planning, determining, bringing the whole scheme of grace to pass,—while we see the Son carrying out the paternal decree in his own incarnation, life, teaching and sacrificial death, we also behold the Spirit taking up the mighty work, and by his illuminating, regenerating, sanctifying and organizing power bringing it to its glorious completion. It is God whom we see, and see alike, in all these ministrations to man as sinful: but it is God in his tri-unity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

While this distribution is less distinctly presented in the Symbols than the fact itself would warrant, we may yet observe this trinity of functions and office apparent in many incidental phrases and suggestions. While, for illustration, the interior nature of our Lord is so fully defined as to exclude all Arian or Socinian error, it is his work, his active and passive relations to human sin and salvation, which occupy the foreground of the picture. In like manner the work of the Spirit is described in a variety of ways and connections and with great earnestness and skill, while his interior affiliations in the divine economy are disposed of with the simple statement that he is a Person of like nature with, and that he proceedeth eternally from, the Father

and the Son. It is thus clear that the compilers of the Symbols, whatever may have been their sense of the doctrinal importance of the conception of an interior trinity, regarded this external trinity as practically and for all purposes of religion the matter of highest moment. And in this they were in accord alike with the general judgment of believers, and with the deepest demands of sound and pure theology. Hagenbach tells us (Hist. of Doct.) that what he styles the *trias* of revelation was held in complete form by the early church long before any clear statements had been made concerning the essential *trias:* and his presentation of the subject shows that while certain speculative minds have in all ages been largely engrossed with the contemplation of the latter, the former has generally been the *trias* on which the faith and the heart of believers have most readily and joyously reposed. Neander says (Hist. Dogmas,) that the doctrine of God as the Creator and Redeemer and Sanctifier of humanity in and through Christ was an essential element in the Christian consciousness from the beginning, and that in this form it has therefore always had a place in the faith of the Christian Church. While studied on its interior and more recondite side, the trinity is always in danger of becoming a speculation, interesting acute understandings and furnishing a field for ideal and abstract debate,—studied on its exterior side, and especially in connection with the matter of salvation, it becomes not merely an intensely practical truth, but the ground and basis of all other truths which are practical or saving in their influence. On this side therefore, it is continually expressing itself in the sacred formula of baptism, in the triple benediction, in the more biblical confessions and professions of faith, and in the songs and prayers and purest life of the Church of God.

16. Proof of the doctrine; Scripture and experience: objections noted.

It is impracticable here to present in any detail the massive argument derivable from Scripture in support of the doctrine of the Trinity as thus defined. It may be freely admitted that, whatever evidences or illustrations may be drawn from physical nature, from the human constitution or experience, or from the nature of God as a spiritual being, or his contemplation of himself in the profound recesses of his inward experience, the real and conclusive proof must be obtained from the Bible alone. With the light of the New Testament as our guide, we may discern words, phrases and facts, which are suggestions of the trinity in the Old Testament, and even in the earliest portions of the primitive Scriptures.

The triple form of benediction, the triple ascriptions of praise, the manifestations of the angel of the covenant, the peculiar revelations of the Jehovah, the special works and ministries ascribed to the Spirit, the striking personification of wisdom, are the more prominent illustrations. In the New Testament, gospels and narratives and epistles alike, direct testimonies are apparent in such number and such variety as to render it almost impossible for any one who accepts the several books as canonical and inspired, to set aside the doctrine. In the baptismal formula, in the apostolical benedictions, and in numerous passages which associate the three persons together as distinct and permanent personalities, having co-ordinated relations and activities, we are compelled at least to recognize an external and economic, if not an interior and perpetual trinity in God. Passages still more numerous speak of the Father and the Son and the Spirit separately, as each in an individual sense God, having attributes, filling positions, performing works, which imply and prove the full divinity of each. It is a noticeable fact that these evidences grow more and more distinct, more and more conclusive, as the New Testament advances toward its culmination, and that some of its most decisive and irresistible affirmations occur in the book with which the roll of Revelation fitly closes. So extensive and so decisive are these testimonies, that those who refuse to accept the doctrine are in many instances driven to the dark alternative of rejecting as uncanonical those portions of the New Testament, such as the Gospel and Epistles of John, which most repeatedly and directly inculcate the truth, or challenging in general the inspiration or the final authoritativeness of the clear teachings of Holy Writ on this subject. The fact that the truth is gradually evolved in the Scriptures, appearing first in occasional phrases and suggestions, becoming distinct in the incarnation, steadily increasing in clearness and cogency during the ministry of Christ, formulating itself in the apostolic letters, and reaching its completeness only at the close of the entire process of biblical revelation, is fully explained by the nature of the doctrine, and by the peculiar office it subserves as in fact both foundation and capstone in the Christian system. Had it been revealed at an early stage in that process, it could not have been apprehensible by the Hebrew mind, nor could it have been made, as it afterwards became naturally and readily, a fundamental tenet in religious belief: Bernard; Progress of Doctrine.

One of the most convincing corroborations to the truth of the doctrine as thus enunciated in Scripture, is discoverable in its

marked effect upon the spiritual experience, the religious life, of those who intelligently receive it. Instead of being, as has sometimes been alleged, a mystery confusing and injurious to faith, the doctrine is found to sustain vital relations to practical piety in many ways; and the argument drawn from Christian experience in its favor, is in itself almost conclusive. It has well been said that, if there were eliminated from the common Christian consciousness all those elements which have flowed into it from the recognition of God as Father and Son and Spirit, Creator and Preserver, Redeemer and Sanctifier, very little of value would remain. The best religious experience, as the history of practical religion clearly manifests, grows out of the soil of trinitarianism, when such trinitarianism is set forth, not as a dry and perplexing dogma, but as a blessed spiritual verity and a divinely opened fountain of religious refreshing and life. On the other side, there are many historical illustrations of the fact that, wherever this vital truth has been either rejected or regarded as a mere speculation, practical religion has declined, the consciousness of relationship to God has faded, the sense of duty has relaxed, the spirit of worship and of service has died away. It is an eloquent statement of an eminent English divine (Smith, J. Pye) that believers in this truth, and in the other doctrines of grace directly associated with it, are in general most distinguished among all classes of mankind for their personal holiness, their self-denial, their readiness to take up the cross, to bear hardships, make sacrifices, and go through difficulties and sorrows for the sake of God and religion; their seriousness, gravity, humility, temperance; their patience and meekness, their benevolence and activity, and their zealous laboring in those works of beneficence to which worldly motives are the least likely to conduct men.

The objections urged against the doctrine of the Trinity are to some extent drawn from the Scriptures, but for the most part are speculative, and in some cases simply rationalistic. That the Bible teaches the absolute unity of God, is not merely granted but affirmed by those who accept its instruction respecting the trinity in God: nor has it ever been shown that they are involved thereby in the meshes of a contradiction which, if real, would constrain them to reject the claim of Scripture to have come down from God for the enlightenment and salvation of mankind. The Bible is profoundly consistent with itself in inculcating both the one truth and the other, and in the manner in which it reveals and inculcates both, it proves itself to be the production, not of man or by man, but of and by the Holy Ghost. Nor is it any

real objection to this statement that, although the Scriptures are thus distinct in their teaching, the Christian Church existed and flourished for the first two centuries or more without any formulated statement of the doctrine, and even without making much spiritual use of it; since it is true, that such doctrines are generally realized in Christian experience before they find expression in definite creeds, and also that Christian experience is itself a growth, or a form of spiritual progress, in which what is simplest in doctrine comes first into practical apprehension, and afterwards that which is more complex and abstruse.

The speculative objections in the case are chiefly interesting as illustrating alike the natural incapacity of the human mind to apprehend profound and complex truth in whatever sphere, its inability when unvitalized by grace to perceive and rejoice in spiritual doctrine, and its pitiful inclination to flee into any available cave of objection whenever summoned to a life of faith and duty. It is of course to be admitted that a doctrine which concerns itself with God rather than with men, and with that transcendent process of disclosure which, starting in the recesses of the divine nature, becomes visible to us in the three forms of Fatherhood and Sonship and the Holy Ghost, would carry in it mysteries which the intellect of man is unable to solve. It is to be expected also, that in such a manifestation there would be much against which the natural heart, misled by its own sinfulness, would revolt. But it is also true that there are no such intellectual or ethical difficulties involved in this doctrine as constrain the human reason to reject it, while on the other hand there are blessed exhibitions of Deity in it, precepts and promises carried with it, joys and inspirations and hopes justified by it, which make it inexpressibly welcome to the soul that is truly seeking after God.

Reserving further discussion of the divine nature and attributes and the trinity in God until these topics shall again present themselves in connection with other specific truths in the Christian system, we may pause for a moment to note in conclusion the theological comprehensiveness, the spiritual elevation, and the practical power of the general doctrine of God thus summarily presented in the Symbols. It cannot be questioned that their statements exhibit marked familiarity on the part of the compilers with the philosophic and theologic problems involved, and with the experimental aspects also of this fundamental doctrine. It is not indeed to be presumed that they had special foresight of the multiplied errors

17. Concluding review: Characteristic qualities of this general presentation.

and issues which have originated in later times around this group of sacred truths, and which especially are so current in our own day. Pantheism in its later varieties was to them an unknown delusion: Spinoza was a youth as yet unfamiliar with philosophy, when they were framing their terse expositions. English deism and French atheism did not then exist except in their ruder germs; and little could the Westminster divines have realized what onslaught these enemies of the Gospel were hereafter to make upon this cardinal section of Christian faith. Materialism with its doubts and negations, and with its supposititious substitutes for the one primal, personal force from which all other forces and potencies flow, had then no recognized existence. Yet it is a remarkable fact that the clear, direct, strong declarations of the Symbols just as they stand, are at this hour substantially the response of the common Christianity to each and all of these later forms of criticism and unbelief. The arguments here suggested have indeed been expanded: the field of illustration has widened; the force of the divine testimony in the Scriptures has been more clearly apprehended and stated. But there has been no essential advance in the doctrine concerning God in his Being, because there can be none. The answer of Westminster is in substance the answer of the Christian church to-day; and that answer is a barrier against which the waves of error have been vainly dashing for more than two hundred years, and against which they are vainly dashing now. And the answer of to-day will be the answer of Christianity through all the future: God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. And in the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; yet these three (L. C. 9) are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory, although distinguished by their personal properties.

The spiritual elevation of these statements is as marked as their theologic comprehensiveness. No one can read the records of the the Assembly without being convinced that, stern in aspect and severe in manner as the members were, and shrewd as were some of them in all affairs of church or state, they were as a body men of true and deep piety. The evidences on this point, already mentioned in part, are numerous and convincing. Such high views of God spring only from genuine acquaintance with him. If these views sometimes verged on puritanic rigidity or severity, —if they sometimes led on to conclusions which sound harsh respecting the divine purposes or administration, they certainly

inspired and exalted in a peculiar degree the men who held them. It is in no temper of cant, in no blind mood of adoration, that we pronounce them holy men—men of God. Their exaltation of God in his being and nature, their reverential mention of his attributes and perfections, their worship of him in his glory and eminently as seen in his Gospel, their devout recognition of his presence and power in all things, and their entire and loving submission to his will, are qualities not in equal measure exhibited in any earlier formulary—not so forcibly or tenderly manifested by the framers of any other Christian creed. It will always stand to their credit that at the very outset of their exposition of sacred doctrine they not only recognized the supremacy of the Word of God, but set God himself on the throne,—that they so heartily believed in him as the only and true God,—that they so adored his perfections, revered his will, and pronounced it the highest duty of every soul of man first to glorify him, and then to enjoy him forever.

Hence the vast practical as well as speculative power of their teachings. The simple proposition just quoted has beyond a doubt done as much as any utterance of uninspired man to influence the purposes, desires, aspirations and daily living of mankind. Comprehensive and abstruse when viewed as a dogmatic truth, it changes when considered ethically into a great spiritual principle, reaching all men alike, and comprehending in its claim the entire life. It is a rule which, like the Sermon on the Mount, needs no special explanation or enforcement: all, even the youngest, can see it and feel it at a glance; and wherever it goes, it leads the heart, not to theology, but to duty and religion. It is an impressive remark of Carlyle in his later years: The older I grow—and I now stand on the brink of eternity—the more comes back to me the first sentence in the Catechism which I learned when a child, and the fuller and deeper its meaning becomes. The entire teachings of the Symbols concerning God in his being partake of the same spiritual and practical character: they are quite as much religious as theological. Their prime tendency is to quicken feeling, to stir and arouse the soul to loyalty and devotion. Especially do they lead to humiliation in view of sin, to the honest confession of guilt and spiritual deadness, to cordial submission to the divine will and working, to the dedication of self to him whom they represent as the infinite and eternal Spirit, having all life in and of himself, and in his own being embodying all possible majesty and perfection.

LECTURE FOURTH—GOD IN HIS ACTIVITIES.

THE DIVINE DECREES: CREATION: PROVIDENCE: MORAL ADMINISTRATION.

C. F. CHAP. III–V: L. C.: 12–20. S. C.: 7–12.

The ground thus far traversed in this survey of the Westminster Symbols, is chiefly ground common to all varieties of evangelical Protestantism, so far as these formulated their beliefs during the prolific era of the Reformation. With minor variations as to the degree of fullness and exactness, as to the order of presentation, and to the measure of emphasis, all were agreed in holding to the Scriptures as being, above all opinions of men or churches, the one absolute and perfect revelation from God, containing all that man needs to believe in order to salvation, and all the duty God requires of man. All were agreed likewise in the general conception of God himself in respect to his existence and nature, his attributes and character, and his triune modes of being. Nor does there appear to have been any important debate on either of these subjects in the Westminster Assembly. Much as the members were inclined to differ on points yet to be considered in this survey, all consented to appeal to the Word of God as the final arbiter of faith: To the Law and to the Testimony all were ready alike to pledge allegiance. Nor can we doubt that in the devotions which were mingled with their earnest discussions—in the days of fasting and worship which were throughout a significant feature of their sessions, they cordially bowed together in true loyalty before the one spiritual Being, infinite and eternal and unchangeable in each attribute and quality, whom—as we have seen—they so elaborately and powerfully delineated as the one and only God, forever perfect and supreme.

1. Relations to subsequent doctrine: God essentially active.

Still it is true that in this theologic conception of the Godhead, the Assembly had practically determined the contents, arrangement and theological character or quality of the entire creed which they had undertaken to formulate. From that conception, the doctrines which they subsequently enunciated concerning the divine plan of things, and the divine sovereignty in creation and providence and grace, were

legitimate and even necessary inferences. It is indeed probable that the Arminian party whose intense conflict with the strong Calvinism of Dort had been the great theological event of the preceding generation, would have held, in form at least, the same general doctrine of God in his essential being. But it is obvious that their efforts to work out a modified theory as to the divine efficiency and purpose, especially in the sphere of grace, perhaps inevitably reacted, even more decisively than they were themselves aware, upon their practical apprehension of the more cardinal truth respecting God himself. In their struggles against what they regarded as a false view of the divine sovereignty, in their endeavor to protect the correlative truth of the freedom and responsibility of man, in their desire to exalt the universality of grace, and justify the free and full offer of the Gospel to all mankind, they were led to put limits upon the knowledge, the regulative capacity, the absolute right of God over his creatures, which could not be carried out to their legitimate issues without seriously impairing the full biblical view of what God is in his being and attributes, and in his physical and moral administration. This may be an inevitable result of all such effort. The history of the more positive Arminian theology in later times, even in its most spiritual forms, reveals again and again the presence of such a tendency. On the other side, it is certain that such a conception of God as is found in the Westminster Symbols will by logical necessity lead on to just such a group of doctrines as are immediately associated with it in the succeeding chapters on the eternal Decree, Creation, Providence, the Fall, and the original Covenant with Man. Without raising at this point any question as to the desirableness of introducing into a church creed everything that is contained in these chapters, we may recognize at least the theological necessity for the chapters themselves, in the order in which they are here presented. And we may now therefore turn from the contemplation of God in his constitution and character to consider him in his activities — in those activities which are generic, and which relate to the world and to man, reserving for future examination those which especially exhibit his plan and method in the field of grace.

That God is continuously and essentially active in the general sphere just described, is everywhere assumed in the Symbols as a necessary inference from the conception of him as a pure, free, personal, absolute Spirit. They give no countenance to the notion that, after finishing the initial work of creation, he left the physical universe to run on by itself without his presence, through

the action of the secondary causes which he had introduced into it in the beginning. Still less do they furnish warrant for the more injurious notion that, having created man, he has left him also to the action of such causes,—the human will as an independent cause being chief among them; while he himself, as in the Brahminic fable, sleeps in solitary grandeur among the stars. It is in the very nature of such a Spirit to be eternally active in all spheres of existence, though he is indeed unchangeable in his being and nature. There can be no abatement or intermission in the activities of the divine Spirit, whether arising from any inward election or from any outward constraint. Nor is such expression of energy the result of unconscious instinct or of forces dwelling in the divine mind, and constraining God to action as by necessity. That he is thus ever active by virtue of what he he is in himself as a perfect Being, is abundantly apparent.

His moral perfections also compel us to the conclusion that his omniscient intelligence sees, and his omnipotent wisdom rules, and his justice and goodness are ever manifest throughout his vast creation. The Confession is in harmony with the profoundest philosophy, and with the deepest convictions of the human heart, in affirming (V : i) not only that God is *the great Creator* of all things, but also that he *doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures, actions and things from the greatest even to the least:* and this not merely by the exertion of his sovereign energies ab extra or occasionally, but also by an immanent presence and power. When faith, says Calvin (Inst. B. I : 16), has learned that God is the Creator of all things, it should immediately conclude that he is also their perpetual governor and preserver; and that not by a certain universal motion, actuating the whole machine of the world, but by a particular providence sustaining, nourishing and providing for everything which he has made. It is in itself incredible that he should have created either the physical universe of things or the moral universe of beings in such a method that they evolve themselves eternally without his omnipresent aid. Still more incredible is it that he should have fabricated a creation which is capable of producing results that are intrinsically at variance with his originating and dominating will. It is most of all incredible that he should ever become indifferent to the movements or the issues of the two universes which he has made, or should grow weary of his providential administration over them. Whatever difficulties may present themselves in the effort to apprehend his activities, —whatever insoluble problems may confront us in the study

of his transcendent movements, we can never find explanation or refuge in the opinion that he is not thus resident as the supreme energy in the evolution or government of all creatures, actions and things. The doctrine of the divine immanency and permanency in nature and in the life of humanity, however mysterious or even incomprehensible it may seem, is one of the fundamental principles in Christianity: without its explanatory radiance both nature and man become alike inexplicable.

In taking up the subject of God in his general activities as thus introduced, the doctrine of the eternal decree or decrees first presents itself (Ch. III) for careful scrutiny and exposition. The term, decree, is here employed to express the generic proposition that *God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.* Such terms as predestination, foreordination, election, reprobation, preterition, relate to the divine decree as manifested within the particular sphere of grace. In the more generic or comprehensive sense, covering the entire field of the divine activity, the term, decree, has its closest synonyms in such words as plan, design, purpose, scheme, project, ordinance, edict. It is both a thought resident eternally in the divine mind, and an intention to give expression to that thought in correspondent action wrought out in time. It involves both prevision and predetermination—the ability to devise and the ability to execute what is devised in every sphere. It does not imply volition or action without purpose, or a merely arbitrary election without regard to conditions, or activity unregulated by the moral qualities inherent in Deity. It differs radically from the pagan notion of fate, by the cardinal fact that it is personal both in the design and in the execution. It involves a true and proper sovereignty such as a supreme person may exercise, but a holy sovereignty which carries in it not only omnipotence but wisdom and love and righteousness. In substance it implies, in the words of another, (Smith, H. B. Christ. Theol.) that the present system of the universe in all its parts, as it was and is and is to be, was an eternal plan or purpose in the divine Mind. Postponing inquiry as to the moral qualities of this divine ordination, or to the methods in which it is accomplished in whatsoever comes to pass, we may now simply analyze the conception itself. This conception contains the following elements,—that God has a plan according to which his activities are exercised,—that this plan was formed, not in the course of

2. The Eternal Decree. The term defined: analysis and exposition.

his activities as specific occasions might seem to require, but rather from the beginning, from all eternity,—that this plan was not partial or limited, but universal, embracing all beings and all events in its scope,—that the actual outcome of events, the historic order of things as they are, is the consequence of this divine plan,—and that the power and wisdom and varied perfections of the Deity are all actively engaged in securing such historic results according to the original purpose.

First: The conception of God as having such a comprehensive and conclusive plan is an inevitable consequence from what we have already learned concerning him in his nature and perfections. To conceive of him as putting forth such vast, constant, measureless energies as are requisite to the creation and the providential and moral control of the universe, without intelligent acquaintance with the immense process in which he is thus concerned—without wise adaptation of means to ends, and perfect adjustment of the whole to some appropriate consummation, would be a fatal impugnment, not merely of his capacity but also of his character. To suppose that in the outworking of this plan things may occur of which he was ignorant when he devised the plan, or that he would set in motion a series of agencies and forces, the will of man especially, whose working he could not tell beforehand or chose not to foreknow, would be equivalent to a denial to him of that wisdom which as a moral quality we must ever regard as among the chief of his perfections. The doctrine of God as the absolute Spirit, endowed as such with all possible perfections, inevitably carries with it the conception of such a sovereignty as is here described, in respect both to complete prevision and to absolute predetermination. Moreover, the relations of such a Being to the universe natural and moral, are such as in a sense constrain him to frame and to execute his own sovereign plans for that universe. Still further, the utter incompetency of any creature, though endowed with angelic powers, to undertake such a task is manifest. And assuredly the religious sentiment in man could find rest, amid all the measureless fluctuations of nature and of life, only in the belief that God, not man or angel, is thus superintending and controlling all.

Secondly: It is obvious that this plan was formed from all eternity—before the execution of it began, and before anything outside of God himself had an existence. Such is the meaning of the term, eternity, in this connection. While the Bible often suggests what seem like temporary schemes or expedients, changes of design or administration, it furnishes no warrant for the

supposition that the general plan of things is itself fragmentary or indeterminate in the divine mind,—the result of a knowledge developing through time. There is indeed an important modification of the doctrine of decrees which comes in at this point, and which in some degree relieves that doctrine from the taint of fatality, so commonly regarded as attaching to it. But the fundamental truth must remain,—that the divine plan by its own nature is eternal. As according to an ancient Confession there never was a time when the Son was not, so there never was a time when this plan was not, so far as the conception of it in the mind of Deity is concerned. And as being eternal, it was also unconditioned,—formed in absolute freedom, above and beyond all contingency that could be imagined to arise from the presence or influence of any creature. The comprehensive decree could have had no existence except in the divine mind, and it was throughout simply and solely what the divine wisdom and will determined. It is therefore unchangeable also—infinitely beyond and above all temporal mutation. There are indeed modifications here or there in the chronologic evolution of this sovereign purpose, but the purpose itself must be fixed in its unconditioned comprehensiveness at the outset and forever.

Thirdly: This divine plan, thus formed in eternity, must also be inclusive of all things and events: in other words, all the agencies, forces, principles, elements combined together in it, were introduced and set in position by him who framed it. Were there any single agent or principle which had broken into this preconceived system of itself, or whose workings were beyond his cognizance or control, it would be impossible for God to be assured of the product of this complex arrangement at any point, or confident of the holy and happy outcome of his own scheme, whether in providence or in grace. Whence could such agent or principle come, and by what energy could it be supported in its action, and toward what intelligent end could that action be directed, and in what way could this end be fully and forever assured? God himself is in fact not merely the only possible fountain of all the intermingling elements in his comprehensive system of things: he must also sustain, vitalize, control all these elements, fully including every one of them in his plan, even from the beginning. There can be nothing in nature or in man, so far as constitutional elements or qualities go, which is not there in consequence of his knowledge and his determination. Whatever difficulties may be met in the attempt to account for the presence of any of these, sin especially, or in apprehending the method in which God may

work out his purposes in and through them, especially when malevolent, such difficulties are certainly not removable by the supposition that there are elements or forces in the universe with whose presence there God had nothing to do, or that his plan was so limited or partial as not to include or control them. All suggestions of this sort impugn either the divine capacity or the divine character, and are therefore to be set aside as inadmissible.

Fourthly: It is also obvious as an important element in the conception of the divine decree, that this plan, formed in eternity and inclusive of everything outside of God, is carried into execution in some real sense by his own supreme will and energy. Such a plan does not execute itself: He alone must secure its fulfillment. Raising no question at this point as to the particular methods in which God secures the realizing in fact of his own plan, or to the relations of his responsible activity to what seem like sad malformations or misfortunes under that plan, we can rest in no other conclusion than that all the forces or principles incorporated practically in the scheme must have come from him, and must in like manner be in some way sustained and regulated by him at every stage of their operation. To hold any lower view involves either the conclusion that these principles or forces have somehow become independent of God, or the still darker conclusion that he has himself consented to the creation of a universe wherein by his own choice things are moving on confusedly and conflictingly toward some chaotic catastrophe, in which he and the universe may perish together. To avoid such dark hypotheses we must at all hazards rest in the conviction that what the mind in God conceives, and what his wisdom determines to accomplish, his omnipotent will and energy will surely bring about. Here at least the Symbols of Westminster rest: the Eternal Decree stands back of all created things, as not only conceiving but ordaining whatsoever comes to pass.

Fifthly: Such a comprehensive and controlling plan or purpose as has now been described must be in itself a sublime and ineffable expression of all the perfections of Deity, and therefore furnishes occasion in all its forms, not for questioning or revolt, but for adoration and rejoicing, for comfort and repose in all believing souls. Instead of being an abstract dogma, valuable only as a speculative basis for a theological system, the doctrine is intensely practical, and to the rightly constituted mind, inexpressibly precious and profitable. It is invariably so described in the Symbols, in other Protestant creeds, and in Calvinistic or Augustinian theology generally. The eternal decree is neither an unconscious

efflorescence from the bosom of God, nor an arbitrary edict, representing his sovereign will alone. In itself and in all its multiform evolutions, it is a clear disclosure of all that God is as a perfect Being, infinitely worthy of love and adoration. These are postulates which nothing in such evolution, even the dark mystery of sin or the kindred mystery of condemnation on account of sin, should ever lead us to question. Neither should any aspect of such disclosure lead us to question the correlated truth of human freedom or responsibility, or to suppose that man is living and acting under a law of natural necessity as inexplicable as that which rules the planets in their rotation around the sun. Still less should it ever incite us to plunge as an alternative into the dark abysses of a pagan fatalism, or of a pantheistic philosophy which seeks to explain human life as evolving passively under the resistless action of some unseen and unconscious power. All such alternatives can afford neither light nor comfort to the soul. They rather involve the understanding in perplexities which it can never solve, and crush the moral nature under a paralyzing weight which it cannot throw off, but must endure forever.

3. Decree and decrees: Different views in the Assembly.

An interesting discussion seems to have arisen in the Assembly respecting the use of the singular or the plural term, decree or decrees, in the exposition of this general doctrine. In the Confession, the singular is employed throughout,— the divine determination being viewed as one in fact, however various its historic manifestations. In the Catechisms the plural form is used; and the one comprehensive plan is described, as a series of *wise, free and holy acts*, issuing from the eternal counsel of the divine will. These decrees or acts are further set forth as unchangeably ordaining whatsoever comes to pass *in time;* and a further limitation is indicated in the added language, *especially concerning angels and men.* The secret of this variety in statement is at least partly revealed in the records of the debate: Minutes: 150–2. In that debate Rutherford suggests that all agree in this, that God decrees the end and means, but whether in one or more decrees . . . it is very probable but one decree: but whether fit to express it in a confession of faith. Seaman, referring to the then recent conflict in Holland, replies: All the odious doctrine of the Arminians is from their distinguishing of the decrees; but our divines say they are one and the same decree. To this Reynolds answers: Let us not put disputes and scholastical things into a confession of faith: I think they are different decrees in our manner of conception. And Gillespie, though

himself holding that in ordine naturae God ordaining man to glory goes before his ordaining to permit man to fall, suggests in the same spirit of liberty: When that word is left out, is it not a truth? So everyone may enjoy his own sense. And Calamy emphasizes the pertinent query of Rutherford in the question: Why should we put it into a confession of faith?

Yet the singular term, embodying as it did the conception of the divine plan and purpose as one, both inclusive and conclusive, and as formed from all eternity, did pass into the Confession, and is consistently maintained throughout the chapter now under examination. In the subsequent consideration of the Larger Catechism, as if in deference to the opinion of the other party, the plural term was admitted, apparently without much debate; and the one decree is distributed into a series of decrees, which are described as the wise, free and holy *acts* of God, flowing *from the counsel of his will*, and ordaining or bringing into existence *whatsoever comes to pass in time*. Questions indeed arose subsequently as to the order of these divine acts, viewed logically, and specially as to the matter of permissive decrees, involving the admission of sin into the world, and of elective decrees respecting the saved and the lost, severally. Yet those who insisted on the unity of the conception as indicated in the singular term, probably felt that its introduction in the Confession was a sufficient protection against the Arminian error, and that the more chronologic plural form might be helpful in forestalling criticism and in commending the teaching of the Symbols more readily to popular acceptation.

One is tempted to say with the astute and saintly Rutherford: If there be any argument to prove a necessity of one and the same decree, we would be glad to hear it. Had the scholastical conception of the one divine purpose and activity in the production of all actual events and issues given way, in the Confession as in the Catechisms, to the more historic form of the same truth, as seen in an actual series of such purposes and acts, no small proportion of the misapprehensions of the doctrine, and of the criticisms upon it now widely current, would have been avoided. There can be no question in the mind of any intelligent Calvinist whether a chapter embodying the general truth be fit to put in a confession of faith, as Rutherford and Calamy had queried, since that truth is to all who hold the Calvinistic system, a natural and necessary consequence of their doctrine respecting God himself. Yet as God *hath been pleased to express by way of convenant*, or a succession of convenants following in chronologic order, his

scheme of moral administration and grace, so in general he hath been pleased to reveal his one eternal purpose in a series of *wise, free and holy acts*, which are evidently conditioned upon each other, and are limited in the sphere and measure of their activity, and which may be studied both independently and relatively, in their proper historic form and connections. As the covenants are to our apprehension many rather than one, according to the biblical description of them, so the decrees are to our apprehension rather many than one,—a series of divine acts, each containing its own specific revelation of the divine counsel, and all combining to exhibit in some aspect that one sovereign scheme, of which in a just sense all created things, all events and issues, are the ordained result.

4. Order of the Decrees: Supralapsarianism and Sublapsarianism.

In respect to the order of the decrees viewed as chronologic acts, two views were also manifest in the Assembly. Many held with Rutherford that in ordine naturae God ordaining man to glory goes before his ordaining to permit man to fall. Some held with Whittaker that in reference to the element of time, the decrees are all simul and semel: in eterno there is not prius and posterius. Calamy desired that nothing may be put in one way or other; and referring to the logical issue of the strict supralapsarian dogma, described it as making the fall of man to be medium executionis decreti. Yet it is evident that there was a strong party in the Assembly who leaned rather toward the supralapsarian view. According to that view the salvation of the elect was the final end of God in the creation of the human race; and the ultimate exhibition of his own glory, whether in the salvation or in the eternal condemnation of men, was to be taken as the regulative principle in the case. To secure this end a scheme of salvation was to be provided for those who were ordained thereto: as essential conditionally, the fall of the race must be permitted, and indeed in some sense produced: as initiatory, the creation of both man and nature was to be devised and accomplished; and as co-ordinate, the condemnation of a certain proportion of the race must be predetermined from eternity. Sin especially was to be admitted, so far as the divine permission extends, in order that salvation might be introduced, and the primal decree of election carried into execution,—the glory of God being manifested both in the final redemption of the elect through grace, and in the final condemnation of the wicked *to the praise of his glorious justice.*

That the sublapsarian explanation had strong representatives

in the Assembly is already apparent. According to this view the divine decrees, contemplated as a series of sovereign acts, were to be considered, not in their abstract philosophical quality, with reference to their final end simply, but rather in the order of their historic manifestation in the Scriptures. In this light, creation is seen to be the first, initiating act; followed by the permissive decree respecting the fall, and the consequent sinfulness of the race; and the decree or act of election is regarded as introduced in full view of what mankind through sin have already become. By most of those who held this view such election was contemplated as prior in time to the further decree or act by which the salvation of the elect was provided for; the individuals to be saved being first chosen, and the general scheme of salvation being then devised in order to secure this result. It is claimed that this view predominated in the Assembly, and is indicated in the declaration, (Chap. III) that *God appointed the elect unto eternal life*, in view of the sinfulness which had already come upon mankind, while he determined to ordain others to dishonor and wrath *for their sin* as actually committed. A similar indication is supposed to reveal itself in the Shorter Catechism,-(19:20) where God is said out of his mere (or pure) good pleasure to *have elected some*—some of those already contemplated as under his wrath and curse—unto everlasting life. Yet the strong statements of the Confession as to the absoluteness and the eternity and the singleness of the divine decree hardly seem to justify this claim. The noted treatise of Twisse, the first Prolocutor of the Assembly, in support of the dogma of absolute reprobation, is suggestive here.

The question whether the Westminster Assembly as a body inclined to the supralapsarian or to the sublapsarian position, has been zealously discussed. Hodge (Syst. Theol.) claims that the great majority of its members were sublapsarian, but admits that the Symbols were so framed as to avoid offense to those who adopted the supralapsarian theory. Macpherson quotes the rejection, during the discussion, of the phrase, to bring this to pass God ordained to permit man to fall, as evidence of the supreme influence of sublapsarianism in the Assembly. Mitchell refers to the same action, and to the language of some members during the debates, as indicative at least of the fact that the positive supralapsarianism of Twisse and others did not have its own way altogether in the deliberations. But indications are not wanting that, if indeed that type of Calvinism did not control the body, it was so far influential as to prevent the sublapsarian view from

having clear or sufficient expression in the Symbols—specially in the Confession. If a majority were inclined to that view, as Hodge on what seems to be insufficient ground affirms, they were not positive or earnest enough to gain any decisive victory for their own dogma. Several phrases occur in the Confession which, if they do not absolutely sustain the supralapsarian conception, do still give no small support to those who held it. And, were the Confession ever to be revised so as to bring it into harmony with the milder and wiser doctrine now current, there can be little doubt as to the fate of these supralapsarian phrases.

Whether it is in harmony with the doctrine of the Symbols to go farther in this analytic view of the decrees, as acts in some sense successively conceived and successively occurring in time, and to represent the particular election of believers as consequent upon the general plan of salvation—God devising and determining first the plan, and then choosing those in whose case that plan should become effectual—has also been matter of earnest discussion. If the historical conception of the decrees is to be followed out exactly, according to the sublapsarian method, this would seem to be the more appropriate mode of arranging them—the plan first, and the specific election subsequently. Is it necessary to regard the particularistic selection of a certain number of individuals out of the whole race, or out of what has been described as creatable man,—a selection made from all eternity, and without any foresight of faith, or any reference to character in the persons thus chosen—as the necessary antecedent to the devising and determining upon a plan of salvation for mankind viewed as fallen? Is this the legitimate interpretation of those portions of Scripture which represent the salvation of the elect as from all eternity; or of those which set forth salvation as having sole and exclusive reference to the elect? Would it not be just as much in harmony with the ordinary presentation of the whole matter in the Word of God, if the divine plan of grace were placed first in the order of time, and the salvation of the individuals under that plan were viewed as correlative and consequent? These inquiries will call for closer consideration when the doctrine of the Symbols respecting the plan of redemption, its scope and its working, comes up more immediately for consideration. It is enough here to note the fact that, whether the letter of the Symbols may or may not justify it, this view of the historic order of the decrees is widely held by persons who are true Calvinists in belief, and whose loyalty to the general doctrine cannot be questioned.

It is interesting to observe the care and skill with which the mode of executing the one decree or the several decrees of God, is stated in the Symbols. It cannot be doubted that the conception of the divine decree as single tends to bring in a correlated view of the divine execution of that one decree as single, invariable and absolutely resistless. And, as the system of nature furnishes the primary illustration and type of such executive energy, it is natural that many minds should conceive of a like potency, equally necessary and resistless and supreme, accomplishing results in the same way within the higher sphere of character. Some statements of the Confession give significance or color to this misconception; as the declaration that God in his providence maketh use of means, yet is free to *work without, above and against* them at his pleasure; or the strong doctrine of the chapter on God, that he hath most sovereign dominion over all things, *to do by them, for them or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth.* If his working in whatever sphere, in the exercise of his *most sovereign dominion*, were all of one type, and that type were illustrated simply in the grand movements of physical nature, it is hard to see how such dominion would fall short of practical fatalism, or how any room would be left either for human liberty or for human accountability before him. But it has well been said (Smith, J. Pye), that it is one of the attributes of the Infinite Being, the First Cause and Supreme Upholder and Governor of all things—an attribute peculiar to his own unparalleled and incomprehensible nature—that he brings all things to effect, in such manner as is becoming to his infinite excellence, without any compromise of his own holiness, and with the full preservation of all true liberty to rational creatures.

5. Modes of executing the decrees: Second Causes: The human will.

The corrective to all erroneous tendency is found in the clear proposition of the Confession (V : ii) that, although in relation to the decree of God, the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly, yet he ordereth them to fall out *according to the nature of second causes*, either necessarily, freely, or contingently. While therefore it is maintained abstractly that God may work out his purposes independently of all secondary agencies, as he certainly did in the primal fiat of creation, yet this declaration teaches the great correlative truth, that ordinarily he makes use of such agencies, working in and through them to the accomplishment of his own supreme ends. It may be that the affirmation of his independence upon the creature—his ability to work without, above and against means at his pleasure—was intended

especially to provide room for the recognition of miracles as events occurring in the sphere of nature, but produced by a power wholly above nature. In this view that affirmation is certainly in entire harmony with the general truth already stated,—that God ordinarily ordereth all things to fall out according to the nature and through the activity of what generically are called second causes. These causes are instituted by him, receive their causal capacity from him, work under limitations which he has imposed, toward ends and issues which in some deep sense he has chosen and predetermined. He *ordereth* them so that, while all things fall out according to them, and in harmony with them, these things also eventuate as he in his sovereignty determines.

This divine activity in and through such second causes is described as working *necessarily, freely, or contingently;* in other words, in full accordance with the nature of these causes respectively. The active agencies of nature, for example, work under necessity,—without intelligence or volition of their own, and without choice or even knowledge of the results toward which they are working. The entire sphere and operations of physical creation come under this law of material necessity; in other words, that creation is a vast mechanism, moving on by forces above itself toward issues not chosen by itself, under the irresistible guidance of him who made it. But in the sphere and realm of humanity, God causeth things to fall out *freely* rather than necessarily,—according, in other words, to the constitution of the human will viewed as a second cause, having an inherent capacity for free action, and according to the principles incorporated in his moral as distinct from the material system of things. While the will of man is itself not a first but a second cause, and as such must be empowered even in its freest or wildest activities by God himself as the first cause, yet he hath *endued the will of man with that natural liberty* (IX : i) *that it is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined* to good or evil. Here a clear distinction is made between second causes working necessarily in nature, and the will as a second cause of a peculiar class, working *freely* in a region above nature—the region of moral life and action. The importance of this distinction will further appear when we come to the consideration of man as a subject under the moral government of God: it is well here to record the fact that such a distinction is made, and made so strongly and unequivocally.

The conception of second causes working neither necessarily nor freely, but *contingently*, is doubtless brought in to provide for an explanation of the introduction and permission of sin.

While nothing can be viewed as accidental in the divine administration,—while even sin is said to be on the one side permitted by God, but on the other side *powerfully bounded* and held in check by him, yet the Symbols carefully deny that God *either is or can be the author or approver of sin;* the incoming of that dire calamity being in some true sense contingent in his scheme—contingent, but not fortuitous or irresistible in his sight. It is said with justice, that there is no contingent event or issue with God; yet in his Word he often seems to make events turn on specified contingencies, and even his decree respecting the irruption of sin into our world must be viewed as dependent upon an abuse of human liberty and choice which he neither ordained nor approved, in any full sense of these words. Contingency clearly implies something more than possibility: it implies both a foreknowledge of the event contingently introduced, and a certain measure of causal force with respect to it. But this causal force differs radically from that which regulates the procession of the seasons, and also from that which directs and aids a soul in the pathway of holiness,—God seeming in his sovereignty to stand aside and suffer the human will as a second cause to work out results which he never created it to produce, and for whose production he holds it to a strict accountability before him.

As a corrective to certain erroneous tendencies respecting the exaltation of natural law in the spiritual sphere on one side, and a fatalistic rationalism on the other, it should be affirmed with emphasis that in executing his decree or decrees God invariably adapts his activity to the nature of the specific sphere in which his particular purposes or determinations are to be accomplished. In creation his own will acts directly, immediately, in absolute sovereignty, with no subordinate agency intervening or assisting. In the sphere of providence he secures his intended results through second causes,—these causes acting with an efficiency imparted by him, and in subordination to his own supreme causation. In moral government he executes his purposes through the human mind as a particular cause or agent,—his specific designs being accomplished by processes which do no violence to the constitution of man as a free and responsible creature. In the sphere of redemption the divine decree is executed primarily through the Holy Spirit as an agent, working in and through both providence and the moral nature of man,—not ignoring or overcoming the human will, but so regenerating and sanctifying it, that the designed result in grace is certainly effected. In every sphere, God truly executes his eternal purpose, whether it

be through physical necessity as in creation and providence, or as in moral government and redemption through a necessity which is not physical but moral and gracious,—adapted perfectly to the nature of the soul in man, yet as assured in its results as any event in the world of nature. These propositions will recur for closer consideration in conjunction with the doctrine of providence, and especially with the plan and process of redemption.

6. Spirit in which the decrees are executed: Moral quality of the decrees.

One further point in the doctrine under examination remains to be noted,—the spirit in which the decrees of God are said to be executed, and the moral qualities revealed in the forming and accomplishment of the divine purposes, whether in nature or moral government, or in the sphere of grace. In the latter sphere we are not left in doubt as to the impelling motive in the divine mind. God *out of his mere*, (pure) *free grace and love*, and without anything in the creature *as conditions or causes moving him thereunto*, devised the plan of salvation, and poured all the energies of his perfect nature into its accomplishment. So also the almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and eminently *the infinite goodness* of God, are said (V:iv) to *manifest themselves in his providence.* Even when he doth leave for a season his own children, suffering them to fall into trial and subjecting them to chastisement, he is said to be most wise, righteous and *gracious* in such severer providences, working out not only what equity requires, but also what the purest love desires for its cherished objects. In these spheres the paternal quality in God, his boundless interest even in the natural life and happiness, and still more in the spiritual development and blessedness of his creatures, is both clearly recognized, and forcibly stated; and so far as the specific decrees in these spheres are concerned, we are taught that the love, tenderness, grace of God are as fully expressed in them as is his justice or his sovereignty. Here the Father blends with the Creator and the King; and over the majesty of royalty a smile is ever breaking.

Is it either unphilosophic or unscriptural to carry the same view into every part or section of the one divine decree on which everything from creation to salvation turns? Is not the infinite goodness of God just as apparent in creation as in providence:—in that primal determination of fatherhood which produced these myriads on myriads of creatures, gave them their capacities, and made them competent to move through all their varied cycles of life and enjoyment devised by him, as in those specific ministrations of interest and care which are so abundantly seen in the

actual ongoings of such a creation? Looking at the decree of God once more as one,—contemplating his single and individual purpose in all its sublime vastness, may we not as truly say that all the perfections of the Godhead—goodness and fatherhood, as truly as wisdom or justice or omnipotence—are combined together in that stupendous plan, every attribute blended with every other, alike in its conception and throughout its progressive execution? Must we even say that the darkest, most mysterious and painful aspects of that decree are exhibitions of one class of faculties or perfections only, rather than the illustration of what God is in the unity and the glory of his perfect character? Must we affirm that the admission of sin, and the enforcement of law, and the punishment of offenders, and the final condemnation of the lost, are events which are referable to inscrutable sovereignty or to vindicatory justice simply, with no trace in them at any point of that unfathomable goodness which ever dwells in God, and which must ever be recognized as one in the circle of jewels encrowning Him as King and Father of us all?

It is obvious that the Assembly took what must be regarded as the severer view of the divine character, as exhibited in these aspects of the one divine decree. Following the general current of antecedent Calvinism, they referred that decree to the *most wise and holy counsel of his own will*, freely and unchangeably ordaining whatsoever comes to pass. In thus emphasizing the divine *will*, viewed simply as sovereign volition, they failed to grasp the cardinal fact that the will of God can be none other than the expression of all his perfections,—of his complete and holy personality. They affirmed that God, *for the manifestation of his own glory*,—the glory of his righteous and powerful sovereignty rather than of his fatherly love—predestinated some men and angels unto everlasting life, and foreordained others to everlasting death. They declared in respect to the latter class, that they were thus ordained to dishonor and wrath, not merely for their sin, but also for the glory, or glorifying, of *his sovereign power over his creatures*, and to the praise of his glorious justice. Following Calvin, while they referred the decree of salvation wholly to grace, they thus referred the decree of reprobation wholly to justice and to an inscrutable sovereignty: they justified such reprobation on the ground of law and equity, even while affirming that the persons thus reprobated were from all eternity chosen and set apart for such a fate. It is not strange that many who read such statements, have said with Calvin himself: It is an awful decree. It is not strange that the milder conception of

preterition should gradually be substituted, even in the minds of the most loyal adherents to the Symbols, for the more positive conception of an eternally foreordained reprobation. Nor is it strange that the question should so often be raised whether there be not some method of softening the severity, if we might not rather say the heartlessness, of these statements,—whether they might not even be eliminated from the Confession, or at least radically modified, without impairing any principle essential either to a just and wise Calvinism or to spiritual Christianity.

7. Creation: false theories excluded: God the Creator. Fatherhood in creation.

Inasmuch as the symbolic teaching of Westminster respecting the decrees of God will again present itself in connection with the specific plan of salvation, in the two aspects of election and reprobation, we may with these suggestions respecting the doctrine, now pass on to the consideration of the subject of Creation as brought before us in the Symbols, (Ch. IV), noting successively the creative act, the divine method in creation, the extent of the creation, its quality, and the end of God in creation.

False theories of creation, whether existing in the seventeenth or in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, are met at the outset by the simple affirmation, so abundantly justified by Scripture: *It pleased God to create.* That the earth on which we dwell with all its creatures and contents, and the vast universe of worlds and systems of which the earth seems indeed an inconspicuous portion, can have come into existence without any adequate cause, by some species of fortuitous accident or fate, is a conclusion not merely altogether unphilosophic, but in many aspects monstrous—a hypothesis both intellectually and ethically inadmissible. An eminent scientist has recently affirmed as a conclusion certainly established, that no fortuitous concourse of atoms, with all eternity for them to clash and combine in, could compass the fact of the formation of the first optically organic compound: and the same authority concludes that such a result is possible only through the agency of some directive force, intelligent in character. That all this boundless result has issued from the action or interaction of certain physical causes or energies at work in nature—the final product of a congeries of processes and evolutions and causal changes, of whose origination man can know or affirm nothing, is equally a conclusion in which no mind, truly apprehending the nature of the problem, can contentedly rest. If any such mind should set aside as unsatisfactory the teachings of revelation as to

the origin of things, it must still ask itself the underlying question, Whence came these causes, forces, regulative principles;—where and how did this series of processes, evolutions, developments begin? It is to be granted that some who hold such theories of creation, while denying the possibility of answering these questions from scientific data, still find the answer as a matter of faith in the scriptural teaching: It pleased *God* to create. If it be true, as is claimed by some advocates of the hypothesis that all the existing forms of vegetable and animal life have been produced through the process of successive birth and generation from original vital germs,—if it be true that this hypothesis may be held in entire harmony with the Scriptures, still these vital germs must be accounted for, and the only possible ground for their existence must be found ultimately in a creative and fontal Spirit such as God is seen to be. We may justly maintain that a wise, deep, reverent philosophy may and ought to go beyond such recognition of whatever is confessedly secondary in the case. We may justly hold that these secondary causes and forces point directly to one primal cause, some directive force intelligent in character, as their only possible antecedent,—that these vast and sublime movements and processes indicate irresistibly the action in and upon them of conscious and competent Mind,—that the only hypothesis which science itself can accept as meeting properly all the conditions of the stupendous problem, is the hypothesis of one supreme, glorious and perfect Person from whom creation has immediately come. To say that this is the explanation of Scripture, and that the affirmation is to be received not only as a truth of faith or of sentiment, but as a fact that can be scientifically apprehended, as well as maintained on biblical authority, is to affirm precisely what the divines of Westminster taught. To their clear statement the two centuries since have added nothing: against it all the speculations, doubts, hypotheses of man, even in our own age of questioning and conflict, have brought no effectual refutation.

The work of creation is referred in this chapter to the Holy Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Ghost. In the comprehensive sense of the term, God, as including equally the three divine personalities, is *the alone fountain of all being*—of whom, through whom, and to whom *are all things*. The Second Helvetic Confession (Cap. VII) declares that the good and omnipotent God created all things, visible and invisible, through (or by) his co-eternal Word, and preserves them through his co-eternal Spirit. The Belgic Confession (Art. VII) teaches that the Father by the

Word—that is, by his Son—created of nothing the heaven, the earth and all creatures, giving unto every creature its being, shape, form and several offices to serve its Creator. The Symbols, as we have seen, bring the entire Deity into view as engaged alike in the creative act. In the list of biblical references quoted in this chapter, certain passages (eliminated in the recent revision of proof texts) are introduced as referring to the Holy Spirit as the special agent in creation, where clearly it is God viewed as Spirit, or the spiritual God without regard to the separate personalities, who is contemplated by the inspired writers as Creator. The work of the Holy Ghost, so far as described elsewhere in the Symbols, is wholly a work of grace; and it may justly be questioned whether there is any clear confessional or biblical description of the Spirit as concerned primarily with either creation or providence. That the Spirit is the executive of the Godhead in creation and providence, or that he is in any natural sense the omnium viventium anima, as Cyprian styles him, is nowhere affirmed. Other passages in this list refer to the Son as an instrumental medium or agent in creation—all things being made both by him and for him; yet these texts are always set in such connection with the scheme of salvation in which the Son is central and chief, as to lead us to view him as the mediate or the final rather than the originating and efficient cause in the primal act of producing the universe. Elsewhere, and much more frequently, that primal act is referred in the Bible to the Father, as first among the three personalities, and to him as a special act or manifestation of his fatherhood. Grouping together, in its totality, the teaching of Scripture on this point, we must not only affirm with our own Confession that it pleased God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to create, but also say with the Nicene symbol: We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. It is in this act of creation, that the divine fatherhood has its primal manifestation, so far at least as it refers to man. It is the Father who creates and who also governs, as it is the Son who redeems, and the Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies. Pearson on the Creed: Crawford, Fatherhood of God.

Laying proper emphasis on the word *pleased*, as an imperial term, and associating with it the teaching of the Catechisms that God *executeth his decree* in this work of creation, and calling to mind at the same time the biblical conception of God as will, holy and supreme and resistless, we discover at once how sublime as well as simple is the doctrine of the Symbols at this point. While indeed creation is as to its purpose referred to the goodness of God,

it is his eternal power and wisdom—the superb majesty of his decree and his volition, on which the thought of the Assembly was chiefly fixed. It could say nothing simpler, nothing grander, than the familiar statement: *It pleased Him.* When we meditate on what is implied in the idea of such pleasure, pervading the divine mind, flowing as a vast river through the divine heart, and finally expressing itself in the sublime edict which at a word called into existence a universe such as this, with all the vast and enduring interests involved in such an exercise of the divine volition, we begin to apprehend in some feeble degree the joyous love, the immeasurable happiness, the moral felicity in the breast of Deity, out of which the universe sprang. Such a description was in beautiful conformity with the delineation of God in his nature and character and relations, which had preceded it in the Confession, and it sets before us in its true majesty this strange, wondrous, exalted Creative Act. Neither the Confession of Augsburg, nor any other among the earlier creeds of the Reformation, contains any extended reference to the divine work in creation: they seem to have rested simply in the declarations, terse and simple, of the apostolic and Nicene symbols. Even the Heidelberg Catechism contains only what may be regarded as an incidental reference to the Eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (26) who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that in them is. In the Thirty-Nine Articles we find only the simple allusion to God as the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. Statements somewhat more extended, but of the same quality, are found in the French and Belgic Confessions. The fullest account appears in the Irish Articles, where it is said (18) that in the beginning of time, when no creature had any being, God by his word alone, in the space of six days, created all things. It was left to the Assembly of Westminster to set forth the doctrine of creation in a form which both fully incorporates the teaching of the divine Word, and most effectually meets, even down to our own time, the queries and the oppositions of human unbelief.

We are confronted at this point by various antagonistic theories as to the origin of things. Those who set aside the authority of Scripture respecting such origin, may simply affirm that it is impossible for man to solve the problem of creation, and that his wisest course is to turn away from that problem as altogether inscrutable. Creation, they say, is in itself a palpable and tremendous reality; but whence it came, and whither it is tending, and where or how it will reach its consummation, it is not given

to man to know. Those who cannot rest in this discouraging proposition may affirm either that matter is eternal, (Mill) in such sense as to exclude altogether the theory of a creation of matter by some power or agent higher than itself; or that matter, (Huxley) is in some way endowed with an inherent vitality or energy, in virtue of which it has gradually evolved itself into the forms which we see it assuming on the earth and in the starry heavens above the earth. The solution of the problem, in other words, is sought in nature rather than in any spiritual agency higher than nature, by which such vitality is imparted to nature, or through whose potency matter has been evolved into its present multiform and marvelous developments. Related to this is the pantheistic theory of creation as the spontaneous outflow or emanation of an unconscious deity—an expansion of his infinite substance into space and time by a process involving neither intelligence nor volition, but is constitutional and inevitable. It is impracticable here to enter upon a specific explanation or refutation of the numerous solutions of the great question respecting the origin of things, which are included in these general descriptions. The best refutation of them all may be found in the biblical reference of creation to the efficient fiat of an absolute, free, wise and holy Spirit, resident in a sphere infinitely above nature, who simply spake and it was done—who simply commanded and, in the strong phrase of David, it stood fast, and is still standing fast through all its changes as the abiding witness to his existence, to his supreme power, and to his perpetual presence and domination in and through the universe which he has made.

8. Method of Creation: The word of power: The six Days.

Thus recognizing God in his supreme personality as the ultimate source of all created things, we may turn to consider the methods or processes of creation, as here described in the phrase, *by the word of his power*. As God himself is no pantheistic spirit, pervading all nature, inseparable from nature, and unconscious in his manifestations in and through nature, so the universe is not a mere emanation from his substance, a mere objective exudation from his interior essence, or an involuntary evolution of forces contained within his nature and working themselves out through their own efficiency. The *word* which creates is not the dreamy utterance of an abstract deity asleep among the stars: it is the omnific voice of a personal, conscious, sovereign God. It is also a word *of power*—a power which is in the highest sense causal, and which is centered and embodied in the divine will. The power of God here referred to

is not the pressure of strong winds, the force of swollen rivers hasting over cataracts to the sea, the sweep of planets through the sky;—these are only its external indications and measures. It is the power that dwells in spirit,—a power apparent even in the imperfect volitions of men, seen in the activities of the flying hosts of angels, but resident supremely in the divine personality alone. It is this power, dependent on no conditions and capable of producing in itself all actual or conceivable results, which is here recognized as the true originating cause and fount of all things. From this all secondary varieties of potency flow: toward this, they all immediately and always point as both their true origin and their final end.

The term, *power*, does not stand in this connection for a single attribute: *wisdom* and *goodness* are associated with it as representing the entire perfection and *glory* of God as exhibited in the work of creation. In the general view of sovereignty presented in the Symbols, it is probably true that mere power, especially in the form of sovereign control, is too prominently, if not exclusively, pressed forward to the comparative retirement of other, even more attractive qualities in the divine character. Yet it is easy to see that potency by itself, however irresistible—however closely resembling a resistless fate, is not the highest or in any sense the controlling attribute in God. Such potency commands reverence, as distinguished from dread or terror, only as it is seen to be controlled by perfect wisdom, directing it by right channels toward righteous and adequate ends. The term, *goodness*, probably refers in this connection less to beneficence—to the exhibition of tender and gracious fatherhood in God in the act of creation, than to moral excellence in general,—that goodness, or holiness, which is the crown and summation of the divine perfections. Hence the act of creation is one in which all the moral as well as the natural attributes of Deity are said to find suitable expression: the whole of God, if we except those peculiar manifestations which accompany salvation, is made manifest here. It may be questioned whether a more definite intermingling of what is indicated in the term, fatherhood, might not have saved the doctrine from that aspect of severity or arbitrariness or mere will, which in some degree characterizes it as presented in the Confession. At least, the word *glory*, which is the keynote of the whole, tends to lead our minds toward the conception of sovereignty rather than to the antithetic truth: it is the glory of the King rather than the glory of the Father, by which we are awed into silence as we meditate upon the sublime creative act.

The expression, *of nothing*, found in both Confession and Catechisms has a deep significance, especially in the presence of the multiplied theories of spontaneous development, evolution, cyclical growth, so current in our time. Not only is creation declared to be the issue of supreme will and wisdom: it is described as a *making*, and a making *from nothing*, by an omnipotent word. While under this statement a theory of progressive stages in creation, with manifest increase of energy and higher exhibitions of intelligence at each stage, may possibly stand, no hypothesis of external matter evolving itself into shape, of primordial germs existing independently at first and then molded into forms of life and beauty by the divine hand, or of laws and processes working out in some mysterious way their own results, while God merely interposes at certain points in the vast, blind, natural development,—no such hypothesis can by any possibility be harmonized with the phrase, *of nothing*. As has already been intimated, the conception of matter as something existing eternally, and independently of God, with capabilities and functions inherent in itself, is decisively excluded by such a statement. Given the existence of a personal, free, primordial Spirit, and the existence and activities of matter may be explained; but not otherwise, however earnest or however confident may be the efforts to find such explanation elsewhere. *In the beginning* to which the Confession refers,—that beginning which is antecedent to all organized existence outside of God, and even to all matter, though it were as minute or ethereal as the fabled dust of the stars, God personally commenced this work of creation. He had no material to work with or to work upon; he could utilize no principle or force or law objective to himself; he made all these, and all that afterwards came into being through their tributary activities; he made *the world and all things therein*, whether visible or invisible, of nothing—*of nothing*. Such is clearly the biblical as well as the confessional teaching. Whatever meaning may be attached to such words as *created* or *made* in the original record in Genesis, there can be no question that the Bible in its totality teaches the doctrine of an absolute origination of all things by God at a period when, in the language of the Irish Articles, no creature had any being. If it be said that such a statement is difficult or even incomprehensible, it must be admitted also that the antithetic hypothesis of matter, principles, laws, forces, systems of things existing independently of God, and having in some sense creative energy of their own, is far more difficult—far less conceivable.

The declaration as to the time occupied in this work of creation is simply an index of theological opinion in an age when geologic investigations were in their infancy. Members of the Assembly were doubtless acquainted with the suggestion of more extended periods, found in theological writings even as far back as the age of Augustine, who declared (Civ. Dei XI : 6) that it is difficult or perhaps impossible for us to say or even to conceive what kind of days the six creative days actually were. But the language of the Confession, *in the space of six days*, must be interpreted literally, because this was the exact view pronounced by the Assembly. Yet there are comparatively few who now adhere to the literal interpretation of the inspired record in Genesis: a very large proportion at least so far modify that interpretation as to regard creation as produced through six prolonged periods, and by a progressive exercise of divine energy,—each of these periods recording itself by incontestible evidences in the forming world, and each directly tributary to the more complex and matured period of development that succeeded it. Nor is it inconsistent with true loyalty to the Symbols to hold such modified views as to the time spent in the process of creation. Presbyterian theologians in later days do not affirm such inconsistency, nor do those who adhere to the literal interpretation, regard such as differ on this point as compromising the Symbols thereby. One important branch of the Presbyterian family officially declares that full liberty of opinion is allowed on such points in the Standards, not entering into the substance of the faith, as the interpretation of the six days in the Mosaic account of the creation;—the church guarding against the abuse of this liberty to the injury of its unity and peace: United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Declaratory Act. The Articles (III) of the English Presbyterian Synod in like manner describe God as fashioning and ordering this world and giving life to every creature through progressive stages. It should however be maintained that nothing in such broader interpretations is to be regarded as detracting at any point from the absoluteness or the immediateness, or the active wisdom or true glory of the creative act. Whether in six days or in six geologic epochs, God *made the world and all things therein*, and made them *of nothing*.

Turning to consider this work of creation as to its extent, we are confronted first with the question whether the entire material universe is included in the confessional phrase; *the world and all things therein, whether visible or invisible*. The language of the Nicene creed, referring to God the Father Almighty

9. Extent of the Creation: Creation of men and angels.

as Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible — language which is quoted in some of the earlier Protestant creeds with small variations—may properly be regarded as explanatory of this sentence. The expression, heaven and earth, might be supposed to include our own planetary system, or the visible firmament only, were there not other allusions, especially in the chapters on God and his Decree and Providence, which clearly suggest to our thought the whole universe, material and moral, as constituting in its entirety the one creative work. The Scriptures tell us not only of the sun and moon, including our entire planetary system, as fashioned by the divine hand; but also of the stars which God has made and counted and holds in his supreme grasp,—of the ordinances of heaven which he has established, and of a sovereign control which reaches to the utmost verge of the material universe. Of the magnitude of that universe it is impossible for us to frame any conception. The planetary system of which our earth is a part, is itself but one, and possibly an inferior one, in the multitude of such systems which the telescope has already revealed. But beyond what can thus be discovered, who can tell what other and vaster systems may exist, including millions on millions of stars within their measureless domain! And who would venture to say that this sublime material universe, created throughout by the will of God, is all unoccupied and void of life,—that it is not inhabited by myriads on myriads of animate existences, and perhaps by rational and moral beings innumerable, who dwell together with man under the care and the dominion of the infinite Being who created them?

Under this view the broader conception of six vast periods, however unrecognized by the Assembly, assumes special significance. While omnipotence could have produced the entire universe, both material and moral, in six actual days, or in a single instant, yet the sublime spectacle of God more slowly and elaborately working out even through long ages his one mighty and eternal plan, is one which more deeply stirs our feeling, and more strongly constrains us to wonder and adore. If the record in Genesis be viewed as limiting itself to this terrestrial system, as the more literal interpretation would require, still it is a wondrous truth that the same Almighty Hand, which in that brief period fashioned the world and all things therein, its hidden and unknown as well as its visible structures, has been at work for measureless ages elsewhere, bringing into existence system after system, and gradually giving form and unity and glory to what we call the universe. Compared with the grandeur of that scriptural

conception, how narrow and how trivial seem the guesses and hypotheses, the loftiest constructions or conclusions of that type of scientific research, which seeks to account for that immeasurable universe without such a conception. To meet the criticism that the chapter on Creation is limited in its affirmation to this particular *world and all things therein*, and therefore contains no doctrine of creation in its broader, universal aspects, and also the further criticism that according to its affirmations, if interpreted more broadly, the entire universe material and spiritual, must be regarded as having been made in the space of six days, it was proposed in the recent Revision to modify the section as follows: It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness, in the beginning, to create of nothing all things, visible and invisible, and all very good: the heaven and the earth and all that in them is, being made by him in six days.

Without referring here specifically to the moral constitution of man as created, we may yet follow the Confession in laying special stress on this particular exhibition of the divine energy and wisdom in creation: *After God had made all other creatures*, he created man. Have we here simply a chronologic succession, or is there a further suggestion of the dignity of man, and of his place at the head of earthly creatures? If we take the latter view, as the subsequent gift of dominion over the creatures would suggest, we must bear in mind the creation of angels, which in the Larger Catechism (16–17) is said to have occurred before the creation of man —as an antecedent step in the grand originating and formative process. Man was created, according to the Scriptures, not only after but a little lower than the angels, so far as inherent endowments go: a being of inferior mold, he yet was made, as the Bible teaches, to be king on the earth, and destined finally to be associated with angels and archangels around the throne of God. The suggestion that there are two records in Scripture, the first referring to the evolution of the bodily organism of man from some inferior variety of organic life, or possibly from some crude protoplasmic germ; the second, referring to the enduing of the animal man with rational and spiritual powers, and the gift of immortality, is altogether unknown to either Catechism or Confession. God, it is said, (L. C. 17) formed the body of the man of the dust of the ground, and the woman of the rib of the man,—by the same creative process, it is clearly implied. He at the same time and by the same act endowed them with living, reasonable and immortal souls. Both of these simultaneous processes are expressed

alike in the comprehensive phrase, *He created man, male and female;* the distinction of sex being indexed not more clearly in their bodily than in their mental and moral organization. And so far as the formation of this earth was concerned, the making of man was clearly the crowning as well as the final step. In him, with his finer physical organism, with his nobler mental and moral powers, with his inherent capacity for control, and with his vested sovereignty over the earth and all its contents, under a supreme accountability to God as his Maker and King, the work of creation became finished and complete.—The question whether the human race as thus created is single or plural in origin, and the kindred question respecting the relative antiquity of the race, will be considered in another connection.

That the creation of the angels was antecedent to that of man is affirmed in the phrase already quoted: *After God had made all other creatures*, he created man. In the chapter on the Decree, not only is the fact of the creation of angels presented as a part of the one divine plan: their number is said to be very great, and to be so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished; and their destinies, whether to everlasting life or to everlasting death, are affirmed (L. C. 13) to be fixed in this creative decree. It is said (L. C. 16) that as thus created they were spirits, immortal, holy, excellent in knowledge, mighty in power, in order to execute the commands of God, and to praise his name, —yet, like man, subject to moral change. It is further said (19) that God in his providence has permitted some of these angels to fall wilfully and irrecoverably into sin and damnation, yet limiting and ordering such fall and all their sins as fallen to his own glory; and on the other hand that he has established the rest in holiness and happiness, employing them all at his pleasure in the administration of his power, mercy and justice. Among the sins forbidden in the first Commandment is the worshiping of angels, however excellent in character or beneficent in their ministries to men. The employments of the holy angels are indicated as chiefly the adoration of the Deity, and his service in whatever sphere. The sins of the fallen angels are said (V: iv) to be not only wisely and powerfully bounded in their influence but also, like the sin of man, ordered and governed by God in such ways as shall make these sins, in which the temptation of our first parents must be specially included, tributary to his own holy ends. In the chapter on the Fall of Man (VI) that fall is said to have been caused *by the subtlety and temptation* of one of these angels, who must first have fallen himself from his original estate of ex-

alted capacity and spiritual holiness. In the chapter on the Last Judgment (XXXIII) some of these fallen angels are included with mankind in the solemn adjudication there described, and in the damnation visited upon the reprobate. Other incidental allusions in the Symbols illustrate this part of the creative work; exhibiting not only the plan of God in the production of these orders of intelligences, but also his authority over and his use of them, and the final disposition which he will make of them, as well as the intermediate race of man. It is a fact worthy of mention in this connection that those theorists who are attempting to account for the existence of the moral sentiments and aspirations of man by regarding them as developments from the altruistic instincts common to men and other animals, can have no possible way of accounting for either the existence or the character of the inhabitants of the angelic world. The ancient Gnostic might suppose them to be evolutions from the bosom of Deity: the modern theorist cannot fancy them to be evolutions from the bosom of nature.

The Second Helvetic Conf. represents the general doctrine of primitive Protestantism in its statement (VII) that angels stand together with men at the head of all creatures; that some of them, having continued in obedience, have been deputed to the faithful service of God and man; and that others having fallen by their own choice, have been precipitated into their own destruction; and become the enemies of the faithful and of all good. It is a fact to be noted here that the entire doctrine respecting angels, both holy and evil, had greater prominence in Protestant theology, and also in the theology of Rome during the era of the Reformation, than it has retained in later times. Such prominence may be illustrated by the strong affirmation of the Belgic Conf. (XII) that devils and evil spirits are so depraved that they are enemies of God and every good thing to the utmost of their power—as murderers ever watching to ruin the church and every member thereof, and by their wicked stratagems to destroy all. This Conf. expressly condemns the Sadducean opinion that there are no spirits or angels, and the Manichean heresy that evil spirits have their origin not in God but in themselves, and are wicked of their own nature, without being corrupted through any external agency. The fact that the general doctrine on both sides of it, is now less emphasized, may be in part a revulsion from the marked tendency of the seventeenth and eighteenth century to an unwarrantable amount of speculation respecting the nature of angels, their powers, their occupations, and especially their relations to the natural and moral life of man. We see this revulsion especially in the relative

retirement of the conception of Satan as the head of that kingdom of darkness, concerning which our Lord and his apostles often spoke in such explicit terms. Such retirement is not without some undesirable results, and is in part at least to be deplored. The fact that there is such a confederacy of evil now as in the age of Christ, and that a vast number of demoniac angels are associated in it, and that in some significant sense this kingdom of sin is ruled over and controlled by principalities and powers, headed by one who is its chief prince and leader, and who is now as of old arraying his forces against Christ and his religion on the earth, is an enduring fact which the thoughtful student of the Scriptures cannot fail to recognize.

The act of creation as here defined, should be regarded as inclusive of the entire universe, both material and moral. And the declaration of the Symbols thus lifts us clearly above all those erratic and unbiblical notions of the origin of the universe which, in forms more or less philosophic, are so widely circulated in our time. This declaration decisively separates the Creator from his work, and sets him above his work, in all the sublimity and the awfulness of his personal being and power. It shows us God as he is by showing us so grandly what he has done; and on the basis of this primary view it affords us abundant foundation alike for wonder and for praise. It is not out of place to associate with this statement of the doctrine of creation—the most full, adequate and impressive to be found in Protestant symbolism—the kindred statement of the Vatican Council, 1870; rejoicing meanwhile in the fact that at this fundamental point Romanist and Protestant are so essentially one in faith: The Holy Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one true and living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth . . . really and essentially distinct from the world, . . . and ineffably exalted above all things which exist, or are conceivable, except himself. This one only true God, of his own goodness and almighty power, not for the increase or acquirement of his own happiness, but to manifest his perfection by the blessings he bestows on his creatures, and with absolute freedom of counsel, created out of nothing, from the very first beginning of time, both the spiritual and the physical creation, the angelic and the mundane, and finally the human creature, sharing the qualities of both, consisting of both spirit and body. The symbols of the Greek Church contain descriptions hardly less significant: See Conf. of Mogilas, XXII; and the Dosithean Conf. IV.

In respect to the quality of this vast product as estimated by

the divine mind, we have the teaching of the Confession in the simple and strong phrase quoted from Scripture: *And all very good.* The repetition of this phrase in both Catechisms shows the firm confidence of the Assembly in the doctrine it expresses. No like declaration is found in the three British creeds or indeed, except by incidental suggestion, in the continental formularies. It is probable that the language quoted did not slip into the Confession without special reason: it originated, it may be, in the consciousness that the excellence of the universe, assumed in antecedent symbolism, was in fact subject to serious question,—especially among those who more or less openly were assailing the entire Calvinistic scheme. Arminian critics had explained the existence and ravages of sin to their own satisfaction, without impugning the character of God, by referring it wholly to the perversities of the human will, breaking in disastrously upon an existing order of things. It was necessary therefore, while maintaining the full foresight and predetermination of God with respect to sin and his complete sovereignty in its permission, still to declare that the universe with all its vast possibilities and perils was *very good,* as God looked upon it in that memorable evening when he ended his work which he had made. The Assembly was not disposed to admit even by remote implication or by omission, that the divine character was unfavorably affected by such a wonderful demonstration of sovereignty as the creation of the universe, even though that universe should be marred and tainted forever by the malignities of sin.

10. Quality of the Creation: Existence of evil, natural and moral.

So far as the material universe is concerned, the question whether it is very good can receive but a single answer. Whether it be the best possible, is a purely speculative problem which the human mind is not competent even to state intelligibly, and is clearly incompetent to solve. We must rest in the simple fact that God has made it, and pronounced it very good: it is the best, since he deemed it best. What sudden breaks occur in its complex movement,—what agitations, convulsions, apparent disasters are sometimes seen in it,—what pains and sorrows it inflicts on man, and what tragic bereavements it sometimes strews in his path, are explicable only in the light of the moral nature and position of man himself, viewed as a creature under discipline. In other words, it is in the character of man as sinful, and in the exigencies of a moral administration over man, and in the character of God as a moral Sovereign and Judge, that such facts in

the material universe must find their explanation. The subject will be more fully apprehended in conjunction with the doctrine of providence, and still further in its connections with the deeper problem of sin and salvation. It is a profound doctrine of Paul, worthy of remembrance here, that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain through its relationship to human sin, and is waiting for its participation in that deliverance from sin which man is yet to enjoy.

To the deeper problem thus suggested, what fitting answer shall be given? If God creates a free moral being, angel or man, does he of necessity consent to the possible abuse of the capacities thus given, making such being constitutionally *subject to change*, as the Confession declares both men and angels to be,—and still go forward to the decisive act of creation, even when he knows that such abuse of freedom will occur, and that his own act will to this extent make the sin of the creature a dreadful certainty? On the same principle more broadly stated, does God determine in his creative act to introduce on earth a moral system in which his individual creatures, with all their endowments and liabilities shall form a part;—being limited to the sad alternative either of making no such creatures and organizing no such system, or of allowing all the possible and all the certain consequences of his act, in the assaults of sin on his holy supremacy, and in the disobedience and guilt of myriads of his subjects, even forever? In a word, is the necessity in the case a natural necessity, in either of these varieties,—and if God were thus shut in to such an alternative, could he pause over his finished work in the final hour, and as he gazed upon it in its immensity and its terrific capabilities, pronounce it very good?

Turning in another direction for light, may we say that God permits this present tainting and marring of his universe for the sake of securing in the end a higher, grander good,—that sin is the natural and perhaps the necessary means or condition to the right development of human character,—that in fact such character is in numberless cases evolved immediately from the discipline and the culture which sin has occasioned? May we go still farther, and point to the Gospel as a foreseen and predestinated remedy, to all the blessings involved in a redemptive system, to Christ himself as a Savior whose coming and mission are made possible only through sin as antecedent, and in whose salvation even the worst ravages of sin seem to be more than counterbalanced? Or must we confess the incompleteness, of all such explanations, however helpful they may in certain aspects appear;

and simply rest in the general conclusion of the Assembly that God, having chosen for inscrutable reasons to admit sin, hath joined with such permission *a most wise and powerful bounding*, and otherwise *ordering and governing* of this evil, in a manifold dispensation, so as to secure through it *his own holy ends?* In the Irish Articles (28) the doctrine is stated in these terms: God is not the author of sin: howbeit, he doth not only permit it, but also by his providence govern and order the same, guiding it in such sort by his infinite wisdom as it turneth to the manifestation of his own glory, and to the good of his elect. This is clearly the historic norm of the Westminster statement.

The Symbols are careful to affirm (V : iv) that God himself *neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin:* they are careful to refer sin immediately to the *freedom and power to do that which is good*, originally given to man as a moral creature. Yet they declare the divine relation to the result to be one of sovereign decree and purpose; abating nothing from the full sweep of the statement, that God hath from all eternity *freely and unchangeably* ordained whatsoever comes to pass, the sins of men and angels included. In the same chapter they teach that such sins are all in some way contained in his comprehending scheme; and that not only his almighty power and unsearchable wisdom, but also his infinite righteousness and goodness, are manifested in the ways in which *by a manifold dispensation* he so orders them as to secure through them his own holy ends. He is said to be a God who *hates sin*, and who will by no means clear the guilty: he is described (II : ii) as *most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands.* And on the basis of this view of what God is in himself and in his administration, so far as his ways are known to us, what can we better say than that the same glory which is clearly seen in creation, in providence and in redemption, will finally make itself manifest even in the admission into the moral universe of such a destructive agent as sin? The subject will recur to view in a more specific form in conjunction with the doctrine of the Symbols respecting the nature of man, his original righteousness, his moral constitution as free, and his voluntary fall into an estate of sin and spiritual death. It will also make its appearance practically in connection both with the providential and moral administration of God over the race, and with the Gospel viewed as a gracious scheme for the spiritual restoration of sinful and perishing man. It is enough here if we are enabled to see that God was not unjust in creating such a race of beings, and fashioning for them such a material and moral sphere.

11. End of God in creation. His Glory supreme.

Viewing the fact of creation in general, apart from the more specific question just noted, we may readily recognize the glory of God as the great end in view within the divine Mind in the devising and execution of his creative work. It is incumbent upon us at this point to bear in mind four fundamental facts: first, that the design of God in such a work as creation must from the nature of the case be immeasurably beyond our capacity for apprehension,—including doubtless specific ends which are altogether above our present knowledge, and which it will be one of the special privileges of eternity to study and comprehend: second, that as is true of the divine activity in other spheres, this design must be multiform and complex in such specific purposes and objects as we are now capable of discerning: third, that all particular ends secured in creation, such as the happiness or the moral development of men, must converge ultimately and reach their consummation in God himself rather than in man: and fourth, that the divine glory—the manifestation of the infinite excellence and perfection of the Deity in and through creation—is an end so high and vast, so sublime and pure, as not only to justify the creative work, but to illuminate it throughout with an indescribable and imperishable splendor. Hence the Symbols justly say: It pleased God (IV : i) *for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness,* in the beginning to create. The exhibition of the constitutional and moral endowments of the Godhead, not merely in but also to the universe so far as intelligent beings are included, is presented in these words as the supreme object divinely sought in the creation. Similar references to the manifesting or declaring of the divine glory as a final end are found in the chapters on Decrees, on Providence, on the Fall, and on the Judgment,—the same supreme end being indicated as regulating the divine activity in each of these specific spheres of action. None of the other Protestant symbols is so full and emphatic on this point. Surely this peculiar emphasizing of the glory of God as the end of all things may be regarded as one of the distinguishing qualities, if not one of the chief excellencies also, of the Symbolism of Westminster.

Much of the disputation around this doctrine might be avoided by careful consideration of the terms and modes in which the doctrine is presented. What is the glory which is here to be made apparent? It is not a certain impenetrable blaze of awful sovereignty: it is not some abstract effulgence emanating as from the essence of the Deity, prostrating the creature irresistibly in the

dust before a present Creator. It is the glory of the divine attributes and character—of the power and wisdom, justice and love of God, as these are respectively made manifest in the creative work. There is no real conflict between this view and that which represents the happiness of the creatures, and especially of moral creatures, as the object divinely sought in the creative work. When God manifests the glory of his goodness in his numberless provisions for the happiness or welfare of his creatures, he rightly contemplates such happiness or welfare as an immediate and a worthy end. He loves to accumulate joy upon joy for them, and to crown their life with mercies, in order that in and through all these manifestations they may the more clearly and cordially learn that he himself is intrinsically and absolutely good. Nor is there any conflict between this view and that which points to the moral culture, the holiness and perfection of his creatures, as an end sought in creation. For in instituting his moral government to be the expression of his sense of justice, and to train his children into conformity of heart and life to what he knows to be right, God is obviously seeking to make more glorious that equity on which his own throne is set, and in which his own inherent glory so largely lies. The antitheses or antagonisms often supposed to exist at these points, and at others like them, are certainly not warranted by any proper conception of the phrase—the manifestation or declaration of his personal and eternal glory. That the happiness and the holiness of the creature are real and invaluable ends, and were so regarded by God in the scheme of creation, cannot be questioned. Nor on the other hand can it be questioned that the ultimate end of God must be found in himself rather than in the creation viewed as a product. Still this supreme end is to be realized only in and by the creation regarded as an expression of his intrinsic glory,—the happiness and the moral excellence of his creatures being at once the issues of and the witnesses to the excellence and the perfection of the Being who created all *unto himself*.

May not God thus equitably find the end of all his actions in himself, and in the disclosure of his glory to his rational creatures? May he not take holy delight in thus making manifest to his moral universe what he himself is, as to his attributes, purposes, feelings, desires, character? May we not with Edwards accept the distinction between secondary and consequential ends, and that end which is original, independent, supreme, and which can be discerned only in what God is and what in creation he reveals himself to be? May we not recognize here an end which is single and

sufficient—which has and can have no other end beyond it or behind it as a condition of its existence? May we not say that the highest happiness and the moral perfection of the rational universe can be secured only in and through its subordinate relations to this ultimate and final good? As the holiness of man is infinitely above his happiness, and as his true happiness is conditioned upon the possession of true holiness, may we not presume that both the holiness and the happiness of man are secondary to and conditioned upon his apprehension of that transcendent holiness in God, which it is the divine purpose in creation to make forever manifest, forever glorious, through all the moral universe? How far removed from all conceptions of selfishness such a disposition must be in him is easily seen, since the highest welfare, the completed excellence, the final flower and consummation of all created life, can be secured only through such manifestation. If God had not thus been pleased to show forth the glory of his power and wisdom and goodness, there could have been no created existence: if it should please him at any instant to pause in this declaratory process, all such existence would instantly cease to be. From this effulgence our being, our happiness, our excellence, are forever flowing: within its celestial radiance it will be our supreme bliss and destiny to be forever glorified. Edwards (End of God in Creation), eloquently compares this manifested glory of God to the effulgence or emanation of light from a luminary such as the sun. Light, he says, is the external expression, exhibition and manifestation of the excellency of the luminary. It is the abundant, extensive emanation and communication of the fullness of the sun to innumerable beings that partake of it. It is by this that the sun itself is seen, and his glory beheld, and all other things are discovered: it is by a participation of this communication from the sun, that surrounding objects receive all their luster, beauty and brightness. It is by this that all nature is quickened, and receives life, comfort and joy. . . . Here, he adds, is both an emanation and remanation. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original; so that the whole is of God, and in God, and through God.

Such in brief was the doctrine of Creation, as to its personal cause and source, as to the nature and extent of the creative procedure, and as to the worth of the creation as a product and to its final purpose—as enunciated by the divines of Westminster. In

passing from the contemplation of this great theme to the closely related doctrine of Providence, as presented in the succeeding chapter (V) in the Confession, we shall find the same lines of thought recurring to view, and the same queries arising, though under somewhat different aspects. While the act of creation is in some particulars unique, and is never to be repeated, yet the continuous work of providence is one which involves kindred mysteries, and is explicable only on similar principles. The vital connection between the two doctrines will be apparent at a glance. If the view of creation just stated be accepted as sound, the fact of a divine providence over that which has been created, and the nature and scope of such providence, will readily follow. The term, providence, which subjectively signifies simply the divine foreknowledge and superintending cognizance of all that is to occur, and assumes the existence of an antecedent decree or purpose in the mind of Deity, is happily defined in the Shorter Catechism, objectively (11) as a *most holy, wise and powerful preserving and governing*, on the part of God,—a preserving and governing which include *all his creatures and all their actions.* This definition is expanded in the Larger Catechism (18) only so far as was needful to set forth the divine glory, as the true end of providence as well as creation: ordering them and all their actions *to his own glory.* The two words, preserve and govern, are expanded in the Confession into *uphold, direct, dispose and govern*,—these terms describing still more fully the divine relation to the support, activity, operation and result of all *creatures, actions and things.* A broader or loftier definition of providence than is contained in these words, can hardly be framed.

12. Providence: definition of: Preserving and governing described.

Preservation as a composite term indicates, first of all, that divine upholding on which the planets in their courses and the soul in man are alike continuously dependent. Created existence surely can have no power to perpetuate itself in being; nor can we regard such existence as so constituted that it will run on perpetually, as a clock when wound, without divine interposition at each instant. We are not at liberty to regard nature either as acting independently of God, or dividing with him the dominion of the world, or as administering a species of vice-royalty while God resides at some infinite distance. Whatever may be said as to the forms or contents of the world, or to the agency of secondary causes in determining these, the ultimate causality must be ascribed to God, and to him as immanent or resident in and throughout

nature—the one dominating and supreme origin and power. The deistic conception of the Deity as being, in the terse phrase of Carlyle, an absentee God, sitting idle ever since the first Sabbath, on the outside of the universe, and seeing it go, is one which has no basis in sound philosophy, and which is contradicted by countless evidences of the divine presence and power both in nature and in human life and history. Nor has the assumption of even a temporary or partial independence of God on the part of nature or of man, though often claimed, any rational foundation. However mysterious the intermingling of the primal power that sustains, with the specific activities of the creature sustained, philosophy itself can admit no other hypothesis than that God is at each instant the upholder, the fundamental support, as he is the original source and fount, of all creatures, actions and things. Such support or upholding should, however, be carefully distinguished from the false hypothesis of a continuous creation, the immediate production of existing things out of nothing at each and every moment,—a pantheistic hypothesis which is at variance with our fundamental conceptions of secondary causes in nature and of the human will as a real cause, and which inevitably makes God rather than man the author and the upholder of sin.

Preservation also implies direction,—such an impartation of impulse or tendency at the outset, and such a regulative maintaining of the impulse or tendency when imparted, as constitute or involve a real control of every creature and of every act. This divine determination, as will appear hereafter, is always in harmony with the nature of the subject directed, whether it be a flowing river or a human spirit. We may simply note here that God not only keeps his creatures filled with life—they living and moving and having their being in him alone: he also imparts to each its own determining principles, gives each its distinctive bent and aim, and sends each forth under his own omnipotent impact to work out its appointed end. Moreover, he disposes as well as sustains and controls, surrounding each creature with a specific group of attendant conditions, and setting each in exactly the sphere where its investiture of capacity may best bring to pass the determinate result for each. The location of his creatures also in their connections with one another, in such manner as to secure his chosen ends through the involved interblending of ten thousand different agents, often not only separate but apparently diverse, is one of the most obvious as well as the most amazing manifestations of divine providence. Man cannot comprehend such supreme disposing or even know his own place in it; he dare

not resist it, for he is overawed with what even he may see of its ineffable wisdom: he can only rest in the aphorism that while man proposes, God thus disposes, and bow down in submissive adoration before him. Respecting the relations of such support, direction, disposing, to the free acts of moral beings, and especially to the sinful action of man, much remains to be considered: at this point it is sufficient to note that nothing contained in such free or such sinful activity can militate against the doctrine of providence as here defined.

This conception of providence culminates in the idea of governing, as the correlative to such preservation in the three aspects named. God governs the universe providentially, in the general sense that he is forever at the head of this stupendous movement, and that under his guidance that movement is ever pressing on, slowly yet surely and gloriously, toward one great issue which he has chosen. God governs providentially in the more specific sense that each part, each fragment, each division of this comprehensive structure is wholly in his hand, and is made to accomplish what he wishes in conjunction with his general design. The naturalistic notion of a merely general providence which is concerned with creatures, actions and things only in the aggregate, and which governs them in some generic way only, is at variance alike with the clear testimonies of Scripture, with what we may discern in fact respecting the organic relations of each particular element in the universe to the vast whole, and with the wisest and deepest philosophy of nature and of man. He who believes that God governs generically or comprehensively, must also believe that he governs continuously each and every creature, each and every thing, that he has made. Without such government, specific as well as comprehensive, providence would not be providence: without such a conclusive administration in which all creatures, actions and things are finally to be embraced, that providence would be at once an enigma and a terror. A governing as well as sustaining and directing God, continuously ruling over all that exists, is the great fact which explains, combines, glorifies the whole.

No definition of providence so exact and so comprehensive as this can be found elsewhere in Protestant symbolism. The Lutheran creeds hardly present the subject, except in the Small Catechism of Luther, which teaches with great minuteness that God preserves to us body and soul; eyes, ears and all our limbs; reason and all our senses; also clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and child, land, cattle and all our property; —providing us richly and daily with all the necessaries of life,

protecting us from all danger, and preserving and guarding us from all evil; and all this out of pure, paternal, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of ours. The French Confession simply affirms (VIII) that God having created all things, governs and directs them, disposing and ordaining by his sovereign will all that happens in this world. The Belgic Confession (XIII) teaches that after creating all things, God did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but rules and governs them according to his holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without his appointment. The Heidelberg Catechism presents the doctrine in practical and hortatory rather than exact form in these words: Providence is the almighty and everywhere present power of God, whereby as it were by his hand he still upholds heaven and earth, with all creatures; and so governs them that herbs and grass, rain and drought, fruitful and barren years, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, yea, all things come not by chance, but by his fatherly hand. The Irish Articles briefly say that God having created all things, (18) doth continue, propagate, and order them according to his own will. In the Scotch Confession (Art. I) we have a statement as cogent as it is quaint, and one from which the more elaborate dogma of Westminster may well have been in part derived: Be whom, (the triune Deity previously described) we confesse and beleve all thingis in hevin and eirth, aswel visible as invisible, to to have been created, to be reteined in their being, and to be ruled and guyded be his inscrutable Providence to sik end as Eternall Wisdome, Gudnes and Justice hes appoynted them, to the manifestatioun of his awin glorie. How far beyond this and beyond all other confessional statements the definition of Westminster goes, in both philosophic accuracy and practical force, may easily be perceived.

13. Method of providence: Providence and Miracle: Providence and Second Causes.

The Symbols are also singular in their exposition of the method as well as the fact of providence. On the one side, we are taught that while God is as truly sovereign in providence as in creation, working ordinarily by the use of means, yet he is free to work without, above, and against means at his pleasure. We are also taught that, in relation to his foreknowledge and decree, all things come to pass infallibly and immutably, whether with or without such means. In the same connection he is described as the *First Cause*, and the *Great Creator*,—phrases implying that his sovereignty in providence is the natural and necessary consequence

of his causal and creative relation to all creatures and things. Similar expressions frequently occur elsewhere.

As miracles are nowhere specifically described in the Symbols, it may be presumed that the Assembly intended to provide a place for miracle in this high affirmation respecting the ability of God to work without or above or even against all means, if adequate occasion for such interposition should arise. They doubtless regarded miracles as occurrences lying within the general domain of providence, or at least as events occurring within the sphere of nature; but at the same time, as events and occurrences not attributable in any way to the direct action of secondary causes, but referable only to the immediate volition and energy of God. It is probable also that they recognized that attestational function of miracles, by which these become in no sense arbitrary infractions of the laws of nature, or empty displays of a power above nature, but rather the significant indices and witnesses of spiritual truth such as is contained in revelation. So far as we can see, miracles are justifiable only in the light of such a function and testimony: in this connection, they seem not only natural and right but indispensable. For how otherwise could God verify his own Word than by signs and wonders manifested within the domain of nature, yet manifestly supernatural in their origin? Must not all such attestation occur on the one side in the sphere of nature with which man is already familiar, and where the whole process may be accurately noted and measured? And on the other hand, must it not be made obvious to the beholder that it is not nature itself which is producing the result,—that that result is one which nature is clearly incompetent to produce, and which therefore must have come into the sphere of nature directly from a supernatural source, intelligent, potential, supreme? If such a source exists, spiritual, personal, sovereign, then for adequate ends, and especially to make known his will to his moral creatures, that supreme Being may thus enter into nature and use her wondrous mechanism in any way he pleases, in the execution of his sublimer purpose. He may, as the Confession teaches, work without the aid of secondary agencies; he may work altogether above them, yet in harmony with their natural movements; he may even work against them, in the sense of arresting their ordinary action, or of holding them forcibly in abeyance, while he speaks forth his spiritual and saving Word in and through them. The only adequate basis of opposition to such a doctrine of miracles must be found, not in questioning the fact that man needs a revelation, or insisting on the invariableness of nature, but in denying openly that there

is any such sovereign Deity, above and beyond the universe of created things.

The argument, atheistic or pantheistic, against the Christian doctrine of miracles rests simply on the assumption that there exists no Being, or at least no conscious Being, who is both capable and desirous of communicating to mankind spiritual or saving truth beyond what nature and reason supply. Mill, (Logic) defines a miracle as not so much a contradiction to the law of nature, as a new effect produced in the realm of nature by the introduction of a new cause — the will of God. Of the adequacy of that cause, if it were really present,—he adds—there can be no doubt, and the only antecedent improbability to be ascribed to the miracle is the improbability that any such cause exists. In like manner the speculative authors of the Unseen Universe admit that, if the invisible was able to produce the present visible universe with all its energy, it could a fortiori very easily produce such transmutations of energy within that universe as would account for the events which took place in Judea. The deistic argument, accepting the evidence that such a competent cause exists, rests on the more specific assumption that God has given to men in nature and in the soul all the religious truth needful in this life,—that supernatural truth in whatever form, if not impracticable in the nature of things, is altogether improbable,—that miracles, regarded as infractions of the laws of nature, cannot occur in such a providential system as God has established on earth,—that, should such miracles take place at any time, their occurrence could never be adequately proved,—and that if historically proved, the fact of miracle would be a hindrance rather than an aid to religious faith. This type of objection has already been considered in part. It may now be repeated that if such a being as the God revealed in Scripture really exists, no valid argument, physiological or psychological, can be urged—as Mill admits—against the presumption that, if he desires to communicate truth to mankind or to enforce duty by some other process than through the reason or the light of external nature, he is entirely capable of making such supernatural communication. It is a wise remark of Leibnitz that in miracles nothing is changed but natural facts, which in their very nature are contingent and hence may be changed; and since they are established by God, they may be modified at any time by an act of the divine will. He adds that miracles interfere with nothing but natural necessity, which has in itself no basis in eternal truth and reality; and that miracles consequently can

never be against reason, but only above it. A living God must certainly be able to reveal himself in any way he chooses. Nor does the fact that man already has some knowledge of God and his will, prove either that he needs no further knowledge, or that he could not apprehend it if given in such forms as God might select. On the other hand, the sin of man, clouding his mind and dulling his spiritual sensibilities to the religious truth already possessed, furnishes a strong reason for expecting that a gracious Being such as God is would bestow upon him such superadded disclosures.

But if God desires to grant such additional revelation, it becomes a matter of necessity that he should attest his communication in such ways as will verify it beyond question to the observant mind of man. We have already seen that merely natural attestations would be insufficient to convince men of the reality of any revelation made,—that God, if we may reverently speak it, must prove himself to be in and with the revelation, by evidences of another class, which are fitted to convince and sufficient to convince the observer. But we have also seen that such evidences must lie within the sphere of nature or the kindred sphere of human history, where the mind may apprehend them and appreciate their attestational force. Miracles, and prophecies also, are evidences of this class, and God has therefore uttered prophecies or wrought miracles, clear and palpable, wherever he has thus revealed himself supernaturally to mankind. On this fact, thus justified on unchallengeable grounds, Christianity rests its claim as a supernatural faith,—not indeed on such external evidence alone, but on this in conjunction with the inward attestation of the Holy Ghost, certifying by a process above all logic that the authenticated and historical Scriptures are indeed the living Word of the living God. The question whether the occurrence of such miracles can be proved, as urged by Hume and others, is one which cannot here be fully discussed, but which may be answered in a word: The proof of such occurrence rests on the same basis as the proof of any other historical event, and may as readily be accepted after careful examination by intelligent and candid minds. The admitted supernaturalness of miracles, instead of rendering them incapable of proof, as Hume assumes, becomes in fact an additional evidence in favor of their historic occurrence: Butler, Analogy: Part II: Ch. 2.

But while proper place is thus provided in the Confession for miracle as an event in some sense above providence, providence itself is described as ordinarily *making use of means;* God ordering

all things to *fall out according to the nature of second causes*, either necessarily, freely or contingently. Providence is thus presented as one vast scheme in which a multitude of subordinate forces and activities are apparent, each working out its specific class of results in harmony with its own nature, while all combine in the furtherance of the one comprehensive issue preconceived in the divine mind. The three classes of these secondary causes have already been described in the discussion of the various ways in which God executes his eternal and original decrees: those which belong to the sphere of material things, acting under a law of necessity which is absolute and unchanging; those which find their chief representative in the human will, and which though deriving their efficiency from God are still relatively free and in some degree independent of his control; and those (really belonging to the second class) which induce results such as God could have chosen only in the way of permission, and such as he must powerfully bound if he does not altogether prevent them. And the Symbols teach that in each of these three spheres providence works equally, though by diversified methods and agencies, but always works supremely, and in perfect wisdom and righteousness as well as with an infinite potency.

Objection is often made to this conception of divine providence on the ground of both its vastness and its minuteness, as including alike planetary systems and the tiniest atom, and also on the further ground of its inconceivable complexity. That nothing in nature is either too great or too small to be comprehended within such providence is obvious, although the mind in whatever direction it turns is utterly baffled by the consequent mystery that confronts it. A still greater mystery presents itself whenever the attempt is made to comprehend a process which embraces alike the movements of nations and races, and the most trivial act or volition of the individual man whose personal identity seems totally lost amid the almost innumerable multitude of mankind. But the inconceivable complexity of such a problem, the marvelous blending and interblending of so many agencies in such ways as to secure through all their interactions one comprehensive result, one perfect consummation, is perhaps the deepest mystery of all. What Bishop Butler in his discussion of the government of God as a scheme imperfectly comprehended, impressively describes as this little scene of human life, shrinks into utter nothingness when conceived in its relations to such an inexplicable process as this. Nor is it strange that such a doctrine should perplex even the most thoughtful Christian minds,—still less that

it should confound the natural man, and lead him even to bewilderment or despair. Yet in the presence of such vast mystery there remains a firm foundation for the religious belief that in and through all such complexity an eternal purpose is present, and that God at last will transform this mingled web into a vision of transcendent beauty and glory. One of the most impressive passages in the great treatise of Jonathan Edwards on the Work of Redemption, is that in which he compares the providence of God to a large and long river, having innumerable branches, beginning in different regions, and at a great distance one from another, but all conspiring to one common issue. After their very diverse and contrary courses which they hold for a while, yet they all gather more and more together, the nearer they come to their common end, and all at length discharge themselves at one mouth into the same ocean. The different streams of this river, he adds, are apt to appear like mere jumble and confusion to us, because of the limitedness of our sight, whereby we cannot see from one branch to another, and cannot see the whole at once, so as to discover how all are united in one. Their course seems very crooked, and different streams seem to run for a while different and contrary ways; and if we view things at a distance, there seem to be innumerable obstacles and impediments in the way to hinder their ever uniting and coming to the ocean, as rocks and mountains and the like; but yet if we trace them, they all unite at last, and all come to the same issue, disgorging themselves in one mouth into the same great ocean,—not one of all the streams failing of coming hither at last.

Of the working of Providence in nature, nothing further need be said in this connection. That God *executes his decrees*, in the language of the Catechism, in absolute sovereignty throughout the vast realm of nature, is a postulate which notwithstanding the manifold perplexities and mysteries involved in it, no thoughtful mind can refrain from accepting. It is the doctrine of the Symbols, as to the providential ordering of all things in such a way that they fall out according to the nature of second causes, *freely*, which specially demands attention here. Whatever they teach as to the deadness of the human will when sinful, and whether in fact their statements on the two points of deadness and liberty do actually harmonize, it cannot be questioned that an important distinction is recognized in them between causes which are necessary and causes which are in some profound sense and measure free. However strong the emphasis laid on the fact

14. Providence and freedom: Providence and sin.

that in providence all things *come to pass immutably and infallibly*, as well in human life as in nature, yet the broad antithetic statement stands (Ch. IX), that God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty that it is neither forced, nor *by any necessity of nature* determined to good or evil. It may be admitted that a strong bias existed in the Assembly toward the laying of supreme stress on the former part of the composite fact: its members were too true to their cardinal position respecting the divine sovereignty, to allow any occasion to pass for the emphatic iteration of the doctrine, though they must sometimes have been conscious that they were pushing their teaching into extreme forms. But they were also too true to Scripture, and to their own deep convictions, to let their formulated system go forth to the world without some clear, strong, regulating statement respecting the natural liberty, the true freedom and consequently the proper accountability of man, viewed as a creature acting voluntarily both in providence and in grace. It is to their credit that, even at the risk of inconsistency, they taught so clearly that the will of man even when he is fallen, is never *forced* or by any natural necessity *determined* either to good or to evil.

Postponing the full exposition of this language until we come to consider in detail the moral constitution and position of man under the divine law, we may here note especially what is taught respecting the general relations of providence to human sin. It is said that this providence *extendeth to the first fall and all other sins of angels and men*, so that these are as truly to be viewed as parts and developments of it, as are the movements of the stars or the activities of unfallen spirits in heaven itself. Nor is this providence limited to a bare permission of this result: joined to this, and as correlative to it, there is affirmed *a most wise and powerful bounding* of all sin, so that it can never overleap the lines which God has prescribed for its imprisonment. More than this: God appears providentially *otherwise ordering and governing* these bad developments, and this *in a manifold dispensation*, in some complex and diversified methods, in order after all to secure through them *his own holy ends*. It may be that the Assembly were not agreed as to the manner in which the sin, thus both permitted and bounded, could be made tributary to the holy ends by which the divine conduct is regulated: traces of differing opinion are apparent not merely in the debates, but in the Symbols themselves. Yet they could together see and confess that not merely the almighty power, but also the unsearchable wisdom and even the infinite goodness of God are manifest in the handling, ordering,

controlling of this vast evil, as well as in its original admission into the holy order of the universe.

It is interesting to observe in this connection how careful the Symbols are to protect the divine character from aspersion in view of this dread mystery of sin, bounded and finally overruled for good, yet permitted both to come into and to remain in this sublime providential scheme. While declaring unequivocally the supremacy of God according to which all things come to pass immutably and infallibly—subtracting nothing from the fullness of their teachings on this point, they still affirm that God neither is, nor can be, the author or approver of sin,—his direct causal force sustaining no perceptible relation to either its introduction or its dreadful growth or progress. On the other hand, they fortify this position by the added declaration, that the sinfulness of sin in every case and in all varieties *proceedeth only from the creature and not from God.* According to these statements, God has put forth no decree of which sin is the immediate and inevitable consequence: he has exercised no volition, exerted no energy, to induce sin or to perpetuate it; while in some sense giving consent to its presence, he has never approved or blessed it. Sin came rather from the creature, and from the creature whether angel or man as constitutionally free, and from the creature in the exercise of a liberty divinely given, under a responsibility such as carries with it everlasting issues and retributions divinely inflicted. While God neither produces nor approves, he does bound, limit, govern and order sin, by methods manifold and full alike of wisdom and of grace, in the determination that at last every perfect attribute of his character shall be more clearly displayed, and the righteousness of his administration be made forever glorious in the eyes of all his creatures.

Comparing the Symbols at this point with other Protestant confessions we discern a general resemblance, associated with some marked contrasts in thought and expression. The Augsburg Confession teaches (XIX) that although God doth create and preserve nature, yet the cause of sin is the will of the wicked . . . which will, God not aiding, turneth itself from God. And as to the liberty of will remaining in man as sinful, it affirms (XVIII) that this will hath some liberty to work a civil righteousness, and to choose such things as reason can attain unto; but it hath no power to work a spiritual righteousness without the Spirit of God. Of the relations of providence to human sinfulness, it says nothing except that God doth create and preserve nature even when that nature is sinful. The Second Helvetic Conf. declares that

all things in heaven and earth and all creatures are conserved and governed by the providence of a wise, eternal and omnipotent God,—affirms that this providence is in harmony with human effort, and justifies instead of rendering such effort useless,—holds that sin originates with man under this providential system, he declining toward evil, and involving himself in transgression and death,—and finally remands the inquiry respecting the nature of the divine relation to this result, to that category of *questiones curiosae* respecting whose discussion God has interposed his solemn prohibition. The Catechism of Heidelberg holds (9–10) that God so made man that he could perform the law, but that man, through the instigation of the devil, by willful disobedience deprived himself of this ability; God on the one side permitting this lapse into evil, and on the other holding man to full and just account for all his transgression. The Belgic Confession contains the single proposition that God, having created all things, (XIII) rules and governs them according to his holy will, so that nothing happens without his appointment: nevertheless, God neither is the author of, nor can be charged with, the sins which are committed. Of the British creeds, the Irish Articles contain by far the most elaborate and interesting statement of the doctrine in the strong declaration (11), that God from all eternity did by his unchangeable counsel ordain whatsoever in time should come to pass, yet so as thereby no violence is offered to the wills of the reasonable creatures, and neither the liberty nor the contingency of the second causes is taken away, but established rather. In addition we are taught (21) that the image of God, as originally given to man, consisted especially in the freedom of his mind, and the true holiness of his free will; and that sin is not a necessity of nature but consists in the willful departure of the soul from God and from holiness—God permitting such departure. God, however, is not the author of sin, howbeit (28) he doth not only permit, but also by his providence govern and order the same, guiding it in such sort by his infinite wisdom as it turneth to the manifestation of his own glory. No continental creed is so full or so clear on this point, and the Westminster Symbols do little more than to repeat what is here so tersely and strongly stated.—The subject will come up again for consideration in connection with the study of Man in his moral constitution, his liberty of will, his fall, his condition as sinful yet responsible before God, and the gracious possibilities remaining in him.

In connection with these generic relations of providence to man

and to sin, the Confession introduces two special aspects of the same theme, of which the first is the special relation of this providence to saints and to the Church. It is a beautiful description which is here given (Sec. v) of the tender ministries of God by his providence toward his own children by grace. Sometimes indeed he is said to leave them *for a season to manifold temptations*, and the corruption of their own hearts,—his object being, it is said, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, so that they may be humbled. Sometimes they are said to be by his providence *raised to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself*, and are taught new lessons of trust in him who thus makes his providential conspire together with his gracious ministries for their highest good. It is said that sundry other just and holy ends are secured by these providential ministrations,—God especially contemplating the true welfare of his children even in his control of nature, and particularly subordinating to their benefit all the general movements and events of human life. Providence over the material universe, and providence over the world of humanity in general, are here regarded as tributary to that more specific and gracious providence which finds the choicest field of its activity within the experience and life of those whom God regards as in the highest spiritual sense his children.

15. Providence over Saints and the Church.

It has been with some justice urged as a criticism upon this confessional statement, that it emphasizes especially the disciplinary aspects of the doctrine, but brings out too slightly its comforting aspects and relations. The Westminster divines were apparently more anxious to set forth the sovereignty in providence even toward the righteous, than to portray the divine fatherhood as thus ministering in infinite tenderness to every saint, and ordering all things for good to those who are graciously the children of God. A chastising, rebuking, humbling, reforming providence presents itself in the foreground of the picture. There should be added in our thought the conception of a ministering, supporting, comforting providence, a solace in all affliction, a crowning joy in all prosperity, an inward presence and power and blessing, as well as an external protection against sin and temptation, and a chastening hand in seasons of wandering from duty. We need as believers to see a divine Father, watching with boundless tenderness over his elect children, dwelling ever in and with them for their temporal and their spiritual good, as well as a

glorious Sovereign, ruling over them and overcoming all their enemies by his resistless power. In a word, the doctrine should always inspire us and all believers, not only to trustful submission, but to filial and joyous hymns of praise.

And as this conception of the doctrine presents what may be regarded as the loftiest view of that providence, so the sublimest phase of this conception is found in such providence as (Sec. vii) surrounding upholding, protecting the Church. In regard to the written Scriptures, we are taught elsewhere that as the Book of God the Bible *hath by his singular care and providence* been kept pure in all ages. In like manner we are here taught that the providence of God after a most special manner taketh care of his Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof. It has been questioned whether the doctrine of such special providence over saints and over the Church, as here defined, is not somewhat at variance with the generic teaching of our Lord touching a divine care which includes alike the evil and the good, and which sendeth rain equally on the just and on the unjust. We are certainly not to conceive of two schemes of providence, working by divergent methods, and bringing to pass one result for the wicked, and another for the holy. But while as our Lord taught, the plan of God in providence does include all men, it still is true that this providence is administered in the interest of grace, and in many ways concerns itself specifically with the welfare and the culture of those who believe. And as the Church, the spiritual kingdom of God on earth, is really even above the individual Christian the supreme object of divine interest and love, it cannot be otherwise than that God even after a most special manner does *dispose all things to the good thereof.* Here we may devoutly recognize Christ as the Lord of providence as well as redemption, causing all things to work together for good to his people, and lifting the welfare and glory of his Church into special prominence as the transcendent object to be gained through his mediation. And what a commentary on this teaching do we find in the remarkable career of that Church,—in the story of its fortunes, conflicts, advances, influence and attainments among men! If there be any object on which we have conclusive evidence that the triune God has lavished supreme providential care—any any object for whose highest good all other things have manifestly been *disposed*—is it not that Holy Church whose existence has been the marvel of the ages, and whose present position in the world is the one problem which unbelief confesses itself unable to solve?

It is impracticable in this Lecture to enter upon an examination of the various questions, some of them speculative and others more or less distinctly practical, which spontaneously suggest themselves in this survey of the providence of God toward his saints and toward his organized Church. Most of these will come within range as we progress in these confessional studies. We may here pause to consider, in part at least, one intensely practical question arising in this connection,—whether prayer has any true place in a proper conception of providence, and whether the answers to prayer are really in some way joined in and made parts of this universal scheme of administration. Prayer is tersely defined (L. C. 178, S. C. 98) as the offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ;—including indeed the confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of mercies already received, as well as such petition for further good. Does prayer, as thus defined, really avail in the way of obtaining anything which in the grand scheme of providence would not otherwise have been given to the petitioner? Does God alter or modify that general scheme, putting some new element or effect into it, as often as the desire of one of his spiritual children is made known to him in the sweet communion and mystery of prayer? Have our petitions any real efficiency to secure results which would not have transpired otherwise? Shall we say with Kant that prayer, philosophically viewed, is only a slight paroxysm of madness—an exercise of the soul which rests on no rational basis? Or on the other hand, with Luthardt, (Fundamental Truths) that prayer is a real power in the world, which it pleaseth God to take up into the mingled web of his providential government? To these queries the Symbols furnish a practical rather than a speculative answer. They teach what is most cardinal and essential in the case,—that God exists in his personality and supremacy, with full power to sway everything throughout the created universe as he pleases,—that he is actually exercising both a providential and a moral government over men, administering both forms of such government in the interest of humanity, and especially in the interest of his church and people,—that he has enjoined prayer(XXI:iii) upon all men as an imperative duty, to be observed according to his will, in the name of Christ and by the help of the divine Spirit, with the confident expectation that suitable answers will be graciously given,—and that he does in fact regard the desires and pleadings

16. Providence and Prayer, how related: Prayer effectual.

of his children, and so orders events as to secure in such administration the blessings, natural and spiritual, which they really need and for which they truly pray. The spirit in which prayer should be offered for such blessings is also prescribed, and the proper subjects of petition are named, including not merely spiritual blessings, but all things that are truly needful, whether for ourselves or others or for the Church: L. C. 182-4; Directory for Worship, Ch. V. The promises of God in his Word are repeatedly cited as giving unquestionable assurance that all true prayer, whether for spiritual or for temporal good, shall be heard and answered. We are certainly guarded by such teaching against the skeptical suggestion that prayer is valueless, or the kindred suggestion that it has a subjective value only, and is to be offered simply as an expression of the feeling and spirit of the offerer. There is indeed a real value in such subjective effect of sincere prayer, as a development of faith, a choice of the highest good, a sweet sense of dependence, a conscious humility and submission, and an awakened joy and peace in God as a source of all blessing. But the statements quoted imply much more than this: a real outward or objective efficiency is clearly assumed in them —an actual and vital connection of inestimable significance between prayer and the resultant blessing.

But of the nature of that connection nothing is said. Old as the problem is in Christian theology, it was not an issue of special prominence during the period in which the Symbols were written. That the Assembly heartily and unanimously believed in the objective efficiency of prayer, cannot be doubted by any reader of the record of their religious convocations and devotions. They were not deterred in their earnest supplications either by their profound conviction that God had foreordained immutably whatsoever comes to pass, or by their faith in the divine omniscience as already cognizant of their various needs, or in the fatherly benevolence of God whereby he is made willing to grant his children all needful good even before they ask him. But whether such efficacy should be explained on the simple theory of the divine will, working as the sole force in the field of providence, or on that of an established concursus between the divine will and all secondary forces or causes tending to produce results in that field, or on that of an arranged harmony between the two spheres of providence and grace whereby the issues of the former are eternally fitted into the need and unfolding of the latter, the divines of Westminster did not assume to say. The solution of the problem may lie beyond the range of mortal vision. But we may be

assured even on rational grounds that in such an economy as that which God is administering in providence, prayer becomes in some way a real power,—that its efficacy is not limited to subjective results experienced by the offerer, and that not only spiritual but temporal good is included within its scope. Though it is not a physical cause or form of energy, whose effects can be measured as those of physical causes or energies may be, still an immanent Deity, living himself within nature yet above it, may utilize a prayer as a real force or power, inducing results which would not otherwise have been effected in his great providential scheme. To use the admission of Tyndall, it is no departure from scientific method to place behind natural phenomena an Universal Father who, in answer to the prayers of his children, alters the currents of these phenomena. It is not involved in this that every true prayer shall be answered in the precise time and way and form indicated by the petitioner, since all true prayer is willingly conditioned by the supreme will of God, and since he may find it for the highest welfare of the suppliant, either to withhold altogether the blessing desired, or to bestow instead of it some larger and better gift. Though such prayer be in fact a movement of the Holy Spirit within and upon the soul of him who offers it—a genuine prayer of faith according to the Bible for some object as worthy, for example, as a revival of religion—there may be external conditions, such as the coldness or worldliness of a church, which preclude the granting of the request, precious though the answer would assuredly be.

It is a suggestive fact that the Protestant symbols generally, while agreed in enforcing the duty and exalting the privilege of prayer, say nothing speculatively as to the manner in which such prayer is answered, in the complex economy of providence. Luther in his Small Catechism says that Christ affectionately encourages us to believe that God is our Father, and we are truly his children, so that we may cheerfully and with all confidence pray to him as dear children ask their dear father. He adds that, though the kingdom of God comes indeed of itself, and his good and gracious will is indeed done of itself without our prayer, and though even the wicked without any prayer receive their daily bread, still we ought to pray, as dear children trusting their dear Father. The Heidelberg Catechism in the same spirit rests in the simple statement: My prayer is much more certainly heard of God than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of him . . . As our King, having power over all things, he is both able and willing to give us all good, and that thereby not we, but his holy name

may be glorified forever. This reticence as to the theory of prayer is the more remarkable, if viewed in contrast with such elaborate expositions of the Lord's Prayer as are found in conjunction with so many of these Confessions, and also in the Institutes and other theologies. It was a necessary step in the restoration of evangelical faith, that the subject of prayer should be thus practically expounded and illustrated by the teaching of the Master himself, both as a marked antithesis to the ritualisms of Rome, and as a natural outgrowth from the deeper spiritual life realized in the Reformation. Liddon, (Some Elements of Religion), discourses eloquently on prayer as the characteristic act of religion—an act which, in a sphere above all speculation, justifies itself whenever the soul becomes convinced of the existence of a Being such as God, and conscious of its own need and dependence on him for blessing. Specially is prayer the characteristic act of the Christian religion, whether exemplified in the Old Testament, or illustrated in Christ and his discourses and in the apostolic teaching. Of its real efficacy in securing both temporal and spiritual blessing, no Christian, appreciating the injunctions and the promises of Holy Writ, can reasonably doubt, however perplexing or insoluble the method of divine providence in answering such prayer may be. Protestantism has ever rested eminently, and in the most vital sense still rests in the doctrine, that true prayer is not only heard before God, but becomes in his administration of things a causal force, actually effecting the order of that administration, and obtaining results which would not otherwise have been enjoyed by the suppliant or by others. And this doctrine is to be accepted as true, however great the diversity in accounting for such causal efficiency, or even in the absence of any adequate mode of explanation. In any view the ultimate ground of prayer lies in the fact that God is free Will and that as free Will he can and does control both the system of nature and the course of humanity; and in the further fact that his Will is capable of being influenced by our desires—by the free will in us as his subjects and his children: McCosh, Divine Gov. B II: Ch. II; Hopkins, Prayer and the Prayer Guage.

17. Providence toward the wicked: Providence and retribution

The other special aspect of the doctrine under consideration relates to the agency of divine providence with respect to *wicked and ungodly men*. Enough has been said already with regard to the divine permission of such sinfulness, and to the providential ordering and bounding of it in such ways as to prevent the impairing of the divine

government thereby. It is sufficient at this point simply to direct attention to the kind and patient action of providence toward the evil and the unjust,—the forbearance or long suffering of the Deity in view of continued wickedness and unbelief. While *every sin, even the least,* (L. C. 152) being against the sovereignty, goodness and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, *deserveth his wrath and curse,* yet he is described as most loving, gracious, merciful, (Conf. II : i) *long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth,* and in this temper showing mercy even to the unthankful and the rebellious. Such, especially under the Gospel, is the action of providence in the interest of grace,—God bringing all the resources of his love and care to bear upon every sinner, often through long periods of time, if haply the sinning soul may thus be brought to repentance. At this point his providence becomes a willing handmaid to his scheme of grace. In strict equity the postponing of punishment justly due on the instant of transgression, the present chastisement mingled with the long delay of penalty, the bestowment meanwhile of undeserved temporal good, the winning voices of a vast chorus of blessings hourly sent, are explicable only on the principle that in all this God is steadily endeavoring to bring the sinful soul back to himself in penitence and allegiance. The purpose and the offered possibility of grace and ultimate salvation, in a word, are the key and the only key to the wondrous benignities of such providence.

But there is another and very different action of providence, in the case of those who notwithstanding all divine inducements persist in sin. Here, as the chapter declares, (Sec. vi) God sometimes *withholdeth his grace,* whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts. He also sometimes *withdraweth the gifts which they had,* when these gifts are persistently perverted and abused. God also *exposeth* them, it is added, to such objects *as their corruption makes occasion of sin,* leaving them at liberty to work out the wickedness they have desired. Nay more: He *gives them over* to the temptations of the world and the power of Satan; whereby it comes to pass that they *harden themselves* even under those means which he *useth for the softening of others.* Terrible as this description is, and severe as the conviction that dictated it may seem to many minds, the delineation is unquestionably true. Providence, in this case, is seen to be acting in the form, on one side of chastisement, but on another of just retribution. The same process which is employed so constantly to encourage and reward the righteous, following them even in this life with blessings, and verifying the divine

tenderness toward them in numberless forms of mercy, is now turned as a sharp sword against the persistent enemies of God, and made even in this world an instrument, first of discipline, then of retribution.

The doctrine of a providence which is not only disciplinary but retributive in this life, as introductory to further retribution hereafter, in the case of those who prove themselves incorrigibly wicked, receives occasional illustration in the earlier Protestant creeds, as it is indeed a clear and solemn doctrine of Scripture. Luther suggests it in his catechetical explanation of the commandments, where such retribution is said to be specially set forth by the divine hand, and the Catechism of Heidelberg in like manner affirms that the just judgments of God in time as well as in eternity rest upon those who sin against him. The Second Helvetic Confession pronounces its condemnation on those who say that God concerns himself about celestial things, but neither sees nor cares what is done by man whether good or evil in this life. The Belgic Confession represents divine providence as supreme over all alike, and as working out its sovereign effects in the case of both the righteous and the ungodly, during this life as well as hereafter. Other references of like character might be quoted. Yet it should be said that no such comprehensive doctrine of retributive providence in the present life as the Christian Church now generally maintains, was developed during the century of the Reformation; and that the thought of Protestantism was then turned chiefly upon that period beyond this life when all beneficent and gracious providence is forever withdrawn from the wicked, and when discipline and chastisement change into unmixed and perpetual retribution.

In the Larger Catechism (19) this conception of providence as disciplinary and retributive is applied, after the manner of some earlier creeds, such as the French Confession, (VII) the Belgic (XII) the Irish Articles, (20) to the fallen angels as well as to wicked and ungodly men. On the one hand, it is affirmed that God in his majestic providence establishes the holy angels in holiness and happiness, and employs them in the administration of his power, mercy and justice,—so acting upon them and so utilizing them that they are confirmed in holy character, and made meet for their blessed estate forever. But on the other hand, under the same majestic scheme of providence, God is said not only to have permitted some of the angels wilfully and irrecoverably to fall into sin and damnation, but also to be *limiting and ordering* that fall and all their sins *to his own glory* in such manner that, while they are consigned to wrath *to be for their sin inflicted*, his own

supremacy and glory are forever secured in them. There is indicated in these statements a doctrine respecting probation as applicable to angels as well as to mankind;—possibly a still broader probation which, with all its solemn alternatives of blessing and penalty, and as a mode of developing character, is carried on under diversified conditions, throughout the entire universe of rational and moral beings. We may at least say that this affirmed extension of the scope of providence to the angelic world as well as to humanity, and this action of providence both in rewarding and in punishing other orders of spiritual being as well as mankind, are fitted both to enlarge our conceptions of such providence, and to inspire us with completer trust in Him by whom it is in all these impressive forms administered.

18. Providential and moral administrations: Moral government introduced.

The doctrine of providence, as thus set forth in the Symbols, obviously includes the moral as well as the more material or natural administration of God. That broad line of difference between these two administrations which Butler drew in the following century and which has been so carefully recognized in later times, especially among those who have realized the need of such distinction in their exposition of the scheme of grace, seems hardly to have been apparent to the divines of Westminster. In their treatment God as providential Ruler and God as moral Governor are practically confused, obviously to the injury of both conceptions. That such confusion is a serious defect will probably be admitted by any one who has fully apprehended the conception of God as moral Governor, enacting distinctively ethical law and under a special scheme of probation exercising his sovereignty over spiritual creatures by peculiar processes, for the sublimest spiritual ends. In treating all divine administration as included in the single term, providence, as the Assembly did, this important distinction was easily overlooked. In the Larger Catechism, (20) for example, what is termed the covenant of life, or the covenant of works, is described as an event occurring in the general scheme of providence. God is there represented as not only placing man in Paradise, appointing him to dress it, giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth, putting the creatures under his dominion, and ordaining marriage for his help, but also as *entering into a covenant of life with him upon condition of personal, perfect and perpetual obedience*, and thus instituting a plan or scheme of moral probation, in close conjunction with his providential dealing. In the Shorter Catechism, (12) this is styled a *special act of providence*, consequent upon

that more generic operation of the same providence which supplies the physical needs of man, and which powerfully preserves and governs man and all his actions. In the exposition of the Law of God (XIX) where the subject presents itself more fully, we are taught that the same covenant, viewed as a covenant of works, binds not only our first parents but also their posterity;—the law continuing after the fall to be *a perfect rule of righteousness*, and as such *forever binding all*, as well justified persons as others, *to the obedience thereof*. And the position of man under that law is represented as a part of the general scheme not of grace or redemption but of providence,—a special act of that divine Agent who under the same economy provides fruitful seasons, and directs the planets in their courses through the sky.

Butler in his admirable chapter on the Moral Government of God (Analogy Part I: Ch. 3) emphasizes the distinction thus overlooked by the Assembly between what he styles the natural (or providential) government of Deity and the higher form of administration described as moral, and indicates some of the specific differences between them. These differences have been more fully noted and elaborated by more recent writers, following out the lines of analysis which his profound mind had pointed out. They appear chiefly in the different spheres and scope of the divine action, in the diversity in the types of law employed and the application of such law, in the nature of the subjects governed and the agency or motive employed, and in the ends to be acomplished through each mode of administration.—But as the whole subject will present itself again for more complete inspection in our consideration of man as under moral law, and also of the law of God itself, viewed as the supreme rule of right, further reference to it may be omitted at this point in our studies.

The present Lecture may fitly close with a general survey of the doctrine respecting God in his Activites within the three specific spheres described, as to its intrinsic grandeur on one side and its spiritual value on the other. Whatever objection may be raised to the conception of the divine Decree as now defined, and however overwhelming the sense of mystery induced, the conception itself, when seen to include not only man and the earth he inhabits, but also all worlds and their inhabitants within the one comprehensive, imperial, and immutable purpose, becomes so great that our minds are utterly lost in the effort to measure its sublime immensity. Equally great is the conception of the work of Creation, when contemplated in its vastness, its majesty and its impenetrable mystery,—a work whose contemplation at once prostrates the

thoughtful mind in humility and compels the soul to adoration. But the task of Providence seems even greater, and still more overpowering. So far as we know, the work of creation is ended, but the task of providence, including in its scope not merely our human life and this earth but millions of other worlds with their immeasurable myriads of creatures, and caring for all these continuously and incessantly, by day and by night through all the generations, never forgetting the least insect that flutters through its brief day of being,—this task baffles all description, puts to silence all philosophy and all human theologies, and permits no mortal utterance but that of reverential wonder and worship. In the presence of such truth, revealed alike in nature and in Scripture, and verified by the profoundest convictions of the sanctified soul, of what avail are the speculations and doubts of men?

It is well that this doctrine of providential administration over man whether holy or sinful, and over the Church, should have had such prominence and been so strongly emphasized in the Symbols of Westminster, and in the Protestant Confessions generally. While in form no issue had arisen during the Reformation involving this doctrine especially, yet it was indispensable to the life and vigor of Protestantism that it should emphasize thus earnestly a truth on which the first Reformers had occasion so constantly to rest in their severe conflict with the papal power. It was often necessary that they should thus recognize practically as well as in theory the Hand that protected and fed, and the Arm that strengthened and upheld them as Christian men, in the presence of their dangerous foes. It was often necessary that they should contemplate this providence as especially extended toward the true Church, and as disposing all things to the good thereof. Nor were the men of Westminster so far beyond such hostile besetments, that their sense of the value of this doctrine had become dim or impotent. They also were men who had occasion to believe in providence practically,—in a providence such as they here described and extolled, so vast as to include all men and creatures and all their actions, so minute as to minister to the smallest want not only of the Church but of every part and member thereof, and so ethical as well as material in its scope as to embrace the moral rule, the moral life, the moral destinies of all mankind. In such a providence they believed, not merely as a theory or dogma, but far more as a blessed spiritual fact: and to that belief they gave expression in a form which no other creed of Christendom has surpassed, and which cannot fail to command the permanent admiration of Christian minds.

LECTURE FIFTH—MAN.

HIS ORIGIN AND NATURE: HIS PROBATION—COVENANT OF WORKS: THE FALL AND ITS ISSUES: ORIGINAL SIN: MANKIND AS DEPRAVED—FREE WILL: MAN UNDER LAW.

C. F. CHAP. IV: VI: VII: IX. L. C. 17, 20–29; 91–95. S. C. 10, 12–19, 82–84.

Following their elaborate presentation of the doctrine of Scripture concerning God in his nature and attributes and general activities, the Westminster Symbols proceed at once to a corresponding delineation of Man as to his original constitution, his fall into sin, his condition as fallen, and his possible restoration through grace. The Confession and the Catechisms follow essentially the same order here: this is also the general order both of the preceding Protestant creeds, and of the prevalent theology of the seventeenth century. Such arrangement also justifies itself on logical or scientific grounds, since a thorough knowledge of man as he was and is, and possibly may be made through grace, is as essential as a like knowledge of God himself to any adequate apprehension of the scheme of salvation. Both parties in that supreme transaction must be thoroughly estimated before the transaction itself, with all that is logically consequent upon it in Christian theology, can be scientifically known or duly appreciated.

But this delineation of man is by the necessities of the case limited or partial rather than exhaustive. The main object of the Symbols being to set forth the central fact of salvation, it was hardly needful to enter upon a broad, philosophic analysis of human nature, with any view to a complete account of what man is in his rational and ethical constitution. What was required was rather such a practical description of man as a moral being—such an account of the manner of his fall into sin and of his condition when fallen, as would bring out clearly the biblical doctrine respecting his need of a justifying and regenerating process, a full and complete method of salvation, such as is set forth in the Word of God. Such an account is here carefully given; and whatever may be said of the underlying philosophy implied in

it, of its searching severities, or the spiritual effects it induces, it justly deserves the highest praise for clearness of statement, consistency of position, and close adherence to the letter and spirit of the Scriptures. Standing chronologically at the close of the long series of anthropological declarations made by evangelical Protestantism in opposition to Rome on one side and Pelagianism on the other, it may be placed at the head of the series, as expressing most comprehensively and with greatest accuracy and thoroughness the divine truth concerning man as maintained essentially in all.

1. Creation of Man: true and false conceptions. Unity and antiquity of the Race.

Turning first to the teaching of the Symbols respecting the origin and nature of man, we may recall at the outset what has been said already as to the primal act of creation. The declaration of the Confession (IV: ii) that *after God had made all other creatures he created man*, expresses the universal and impregnable belief of Christendom as to the origin of our race. The same divine fiat which produced the material universe *of nothing*, and which had already given existence and rational endowment to angelic beings, is here said to create man as the final product of its sovereign activity. The Symbols rest at this point on the simple testimony of the Bible, taken as an authentic record of facts. This creative act includes of course both the soul and the body of man. The sublime language of Scripture simply assures us that at the divine inbreathing man became a living *soul;* and we may rest upon the inspired declaration, though the creation of a soul is an act too wonderful, too transcendent, to be in any sense whatever conceived by finite minds. In respect to the bodily organism, it is said with biblical simplicity (L. C. 17) that God *formed the body of the man of the dust of the ground, and the woman of the rib of the man*,—a description which must be regarded as at least essentially true, however metaphorical the language or inconceivable the divine procedure. We have in these declarations no suggestion of any process of evolution from primitive germs, or of development from antecedent and inferior orders of creatures. We have no hint of potencies existing in unorganized matter, or of any process by which out of such matter man might have emerged without the immediate volition of a personal Deity. The formation of the body of man from *the dust of the ground* is not indeed a creation *ex nihilo*, as was the creation of the earth or of the physical universe; yet it was none the less a divine, personal, creative process. Shall it be claimed that this is simply an illustration of the comparative ignorance of the

period in which the Symbols were produced, and that their statements cannot stand the tests of a more scientific age? The sufficient answer to this claim is that, while the science of our time has extensively challenged the authenticity of the biblical record, it has not yet proved that record unreliable. Its theories respecting the origination of man from antecedent forms of existence really give us at the best no account of that primal force, by which matter became endowed with such creative potencies, or by which those processes of evolution or development have been instituted which reach their culmination, as is alleged, in man. It is at least a present fact that no satisfying verification of such naturalistic theories of the origin of the human race has as yet been attained; these hypotheses still stand before us rather as ingenious guesses or suggestions than as established truths. And so long as matter is not actually detected in the process of passing from inorganic into organized forms—so long as the various species of organic life are not seen to be shifting, one into another, but rather are found to remain as changeless and unchangeable as the system of nature itself, so long must the biblical record concerning the origin of man be accepted as essentially correct. If what is now admitted to be hypothesis, wholly or chiefly, shall hereafter be transmuted into scientific fact, clear and unquestionable, the question whether this divine record is longer worthy of our trust, will become one of great practical moment: until then, it is no mark of an unintelligent or unscientific mind to receive that record as true.

In like manner does this teaching exclude the theory of several creations, or of a plurality of species in man. That great differences now exist in the various tribes or races of mankind, and that such differences have existed in general with little modification during so much of the career of humanity as is described in authentic history, is to be freely granted. It may also be admitted that great difficulties stand in the way of any natural explanation of these differences. Yet on the other hand it cannot be questioned that changes have occurred historically in given instances, which reveal the possibility of still greater changes during the remoter past. Nor is it an unwarrantable conjecture that such greater changes may have been providentially wrought, possibly in conjunction with the developments of human sinfulness, at some specific period in the primitive history of mankind. It is also certain that philological and archæological researches are now pointing more and more decisively toward a common origin for the race. And if to these evidences there be added the underlying elements of unity so decisively manifested in the constitution of

mankind, however diverse humanity is in respect to certain outward characteristics, we may be warranted on scientific grounds alone in regarding the race as one in origin. Moreover the witness of Scripture to the moral unity of mankind, with the mutual relations flowing therefrom, and to the common experience of the race as sinful, and its common need of one great salvation, must be regarded by the Christian mind as furnishing a demonstration still more definite and complete.

As to the antiquity of this one race, the Symbols say nothing: questions of chronology, based on Scripture, were not considered in the Assembly. It may be presumed that the body simply accepted the current view, based on the Hebrew text, rather than that suggested by the Septuagint. Of this, the fact that the Annals of Ussher were published but shortly after the adjournment of the Assembly (1650–54) and were adopted in current editions of the Authorized Version, may be taken as incidental evidence. But if, in view of the larger figures given in the Septuagint or suggested by Egyptian or Babylonian or Chinese annals, or of the apparent necessity for a longer period in order to account adequately for the growth of nations, and the spread of the race since the era of the Flood, more time than this is requisite, the Symbols do not forbid such supposition. Yet the prolongation of this period to tens of thousands of years, stretching far back of even the most extended data obtainable from such sources, is certainly not as yet demanded by any reliable discoveries respecting the presence of man upon the earth, nor is it consistent with due regard to the historic quality of the Sacred Writings. At least the testimonies of geology, the human remains authentically reported, the primeval implements found, the lake dwellings, and other like traces of the earliest known antiquity, furnish thus far no such array of evidence as justifies a serious challenging of the biblical account. Here, as in respect to the question of the origin of man, it is safe to ask for more conclusive proof, before that account is set aside as unhistoric.

The three problems thus named respecting the origin, unity and antiquity of the human race deserve thoughtful consideration at the hands of the Christian scholar,—not merely for purposes of defense against current forms of unbelief, but far more in view of certain practical relations which they sustain alike to Christian theology and to religious experience. It is a matter of vital moment to both doctrine and faith that we should regard man as the immediate and the glorious product of a divine volition, rather than the final issue of some primordial process originating we know

not when or how, and carried on we know not how or whither. Still more important is it in many practical aspects to hold to the essential oneness in nature and the consequent moral brotherhood of mankind, alike in the estate of sin and in the higher estate and experience of redemption. Nor are there lacking serious reasons, especially in the interpretation of human history, for the strenuous maintenance of the doctrine of Scripture respecting the date of the advent of man upon the earth. And in view of such practical relations of these three current problems, it surely is not wise for the Christian scholar either to ignore these problems as trivial, or to hasten too readily to the acceptance of any merely hypothetical solution.

2. Constitution of man as created: His original endowments: Physical, intellectual and moral: Image of God.

The description given by the Symbols (IV : ii) of the constitution of man as created is exact, full and practical. As to his physical nature, he was constituted *male and female*,—not with infantile potentialities merely, but with full and matured capacity for the propagation of the species according to the divine command, and for the exercise of vice-regal control over nature. This is said to be a divine provision in providence, God *ordaining marriage for his help*, and thus sending him forth in every way physically endowed for his appointed destiny on the earth. This provision for man as a physical being is further illustrated (L. C. 20) in the *placing him in Paradise and appointing him to dress it*, in order that his bodily organism might receive both supply and exercise according to its need. God further recognized the claims of this physical constitution in man, by *giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth*, and by causing nature to supply with luxuriant fullness his corporeal necessities. Man in his physical structure, with his varied appetites and desires, and with his capacities for useful activity and for self-perpetuation, was thus physically a glorious illustration of the divine wisdom and goodness. Made after the angels and all other creatures, and constituted on different principles by the union in him of the flesh and the spirit, he was peculiarly fitted even in his corporeal structure and adaptations to show forth the praises of him by whose hand and skill he had been *formed*.

Intellectually, our first parents were (L. C. 20) *endued with living, reasonable and immortal souls*:—this mental quality separating them decisively from all varieties of merely animal being. For the term, soul, here implies more than a merely sentient existence such as inferior creatures may enjoy. The soul of man

was a *living* thing—a product flowing immediately from the life of God, breathed into him by a divine communication, and endowed with forms and measures of intelligence which ally it with angels rather than with the beasts that perish. And this soul was *reasonable* in its constitution and its modes of activity: it possessed capacities for perception, for judgment, for rational processes of the loftiest type. It is said in the same connection that God created man after his own image or likeness *in knowledge* as well as in holiness,—not indeed as knowing all that God knows, or acquiring knowledge as God possesses it, but rather as having capacities which enabled him to perceive divine things, and to comprehend such truths as God chose to reveal. Such capacity was indeed indispensable to the exercise of those moral endowments with which man was also gifted; but it was likewise essential to the effectual filling of his physical sphere, and to the proper care and use of his corporeal structure. The instincts of an animal, the sentient intelligence manifested sometimes by inferior orders of being, were not sufficient for a living person filling such higher and larger relations. It was not essential that man should have been at creation a philosopher, endowed with extensive knowledge concerning the divine purposes or the structure or government of the universe. Still less are we constrained to think of him as a child or a savage, intellectually,—growing slowly through educational processes into such knowledge as was essential alike to his physical and his moral existence. The divine enduement was immediate, adequate, glorious,—a sublime part of that process of creation from which all life and being sprang.

The moral endowments of man are specially indicated in the phrase, *after his own image* (IV : ii), and in the corresponding terms, *righteousness and true holiness*. The Irish Articles (21) define the image of God in man, as consisting especially in the wisdom of his mind and the true holiness of his free will,—a statement including both natural likeness in the matter of personality, and moral or spiritual likeness in respect to the essential elements of character. While this resemblance to God consisted partly in the rational capacities of man—in the intellectual equipment which lifted him altogether above the animal creation, the main element in that resemblance must be regarded, as these Articles teach, as moral—lying in the intrinsic holiness of the free will. The primitive man was specially like God in his distinctively ethical and spiritual nature and disposition. *The law of God was written in their hearts*, in such a sense and measure that our first parents were able to comprehend at once the divine claims

and to appreciate their personal obligation to obedience. Conscience as well as reason was central and supreme in their higher constitution. They also had *power to fulfill* what they had capacity to see and to appreciate. This gift of free will in the direction of holiness,—this innate consciousness of ability to do as well as to perceive and feel the right,—constituted the highest element in their moral nature, and made them definitely like angels and like God. It is therefore strongly said (IX : ii) that *man in his state of innocency had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God.* The duplicated expressions, freedom and power, to will and to do, good and well-pleasing (or good inherently and good as acceptable with God), are indicative of the confidence and heartiness with which this declaration was made. The language differs widely from the Roman dogma of original righteousness, as being not a native endowment in man but rather a superadded gift,—a gift whose loss or forfeiture in the Fall simply placed him back in the relatively characterless state in which according to the doctrine of Romanism he was created. Still more decisively does it exclude the Pelagian conception of moral indifferentism—an inchoate condition of soul, having in it merely the possibilities of character according as the independent will might determine, in the presence of future opportunities of choice. However helpful such a conception might at first sight appear, as an explanation of the moral career of either Adam or his posterity, it is decisively excluded by the emphatic record of the Bible : In our image—after our likeness. As created, our first parents possessed, not the mere possibility of righteousness and true holiness, but rather such a positive stamp and disposition spiritually as predisposed them toward righteous and holy living. The image of God is thus, in the fine phrase of Calvin, the uncorrupted excellence of human nature which shone in Adam and Eve before their defection. The germs of a divine character, with freedom and power to grow progressively into actual goodness and into complete likeness to God and acceptance with him, were thus implanted within them. In other words, so far as nature, constitution, tendency were concerned, they were positively holy from the first moment of their conscious existence.

Such is doubtless the meaning of the theological phrase, *original righteousness.* That phrase was derived directly from the Thirty-Nine Articles, in which (IX) it appears in the antithetic definition of original sin. Similar descriptions are found in several of the continental symbols. For illustration, the Heidelberg Catechism declares (6) that man was created in real or true righteousness

or holiness; the Second Helvetic Confession, (Cap. VII) that he was created good, in the image and similitude of God; the French Confession, (IX) that he was created pure and perfect, in the image of God; the Belgic Confession, (XIV) that God formed man after his own image, good, righteous and holy. It was not intended by this phrase to teach that man possessed at the start a righteousness like that of God or of angels, or even like that attained by sanctified men under the Gospel. In other words he did not possess a developed or matured, but rather an inchoate righteousness, yet one containing within itself the germs or beginnings even of such ethical perfection as dwells in angels or in God himself. It was as truly a capacity in the primitive man as the capacity to reason,—a strong and clear capability and tendency of the soul toward God and all goodness. In this sense it is denominated *holiness*, as being much more than the absence of sin,—as being a positive principle in the moral nature, though not an immutable principle above the possibility of change. This possibility of transgression is not only implied in the expression, *being left to the liberty of their own will:* it is indicated still more strongly in the phrase, (IX:ii) *yet mutably, so that they might fall from it*, although man had constitutional freedom and power to do that which is good. Possessing indeed the image of God, and affiliated with him in feeling and nature, it still was possible for our first parents thus to pervert the liberty bestowed on them, and to sink into a condition of voluntary sinfulness, and of consequent spiritual death.

Man as thus constituted and endowed, was placed at the head of the earthly creation. It is said (L. C. 20) that the providence of God toward man was exhibited in *placing him in paradise, appointing him to dress it*, and giving him liberty to eat of the fruit of the earth. This earth, in its primitive beauty and fertility, is thus represented as the predestined and fit abode of our first parents; and a corresponding right of occupancy and use was thus divinely vested in them. We may presume that, when the Creator looked upon the world at the close of the creative process and pronounced it very good, he was contemplating it specially as the home of man—a paradise suited to the nature and needs of the beings whom he had formed out of the dust to be its occupants, and for whose posterity, even in the sinfulness that was to come upon them, it constituted a fitting abode. From what is suggested in Scripture as to the effects of the curse upon the earth itself,—as to the changes wrought in the system of nature in order to make the world an appropriate

3. Place in nature: Dominion over nature: Divine estimate of man.

disciplinary sphere for a race of sinners, we may to some extent surmise what was the beauty, the adaptation, the divine perfectness of the original Eden. The simple sketch which the Holy Spirit has given, is intended only to furnish to our faith some glimpses of that pristine paradise such as would make us more conscious of the correlative sadness of our present estate, and more ardent in our aspirations after the nobler paradise that is through grace to be regained.

Into this primitive estate our first parents were introduced, not as owners but rather as stewards, with unchallenged right of appropriation, yet under adequate accountability to God for whatever use they might make of the blessings with which they were intrusted. It is well to recognize here the universal fact of stewardship, not merely as belonging to the state of grace, or implied in the position of man as sinful under law, but rather as a fact that must exist wherever moral beings are found. Absolute ownership of anything is impossible even to angels: God alone is absolute owner of all. Hence every moral being is a steward, having partial or temporary ownership, but accountable to God at last for each gift he receives, for each power he wields, for each opportunity or privilege he enjoys. Such was the position of man in the primitive Eden. He was *placed* in it by its true owner; he was *appointed* to dress and keep it; he was *given liberty* to apply to his own needs whatever it contained. This stewardship was vested in him in the original constitution of nature; nor did his subsequent sin, and his expulsion from paradise, absolve him from the duties of such stewardship over the world in which he was still to dwell. That stewardship follows his descendants universally, however perverted or corrupt their actual administration of such stewardship may be. It follows them still more impressively in the estate of grace, and becomes a primal law in their administration of these natural trusts under the Gospel. It belongs indeed to man as a moral being, and will hold and control him always,—the apparent severities of it fading away as his disposition is sanctified, and its value as an element in his spiritual experience and perfection becoming more and more apparent, even forever.

It is obvious that the phrase, *dominion over the creatures*, should be interpreted in the light of this primal, comprehensive, inevitable stewardship. The right of appropriation carries with it the right of control: adequate authority is essential to adequate use. God has to this extent crowned man with glory and with honor, as in some true sense his vice-gerent on the earth, and has

ordained him to have dominion over the other works of his hand. All things are put under his feet—are subordinated to his administration: whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas is subject unto him. The failure of man to retain this primeval supremacy, the revolt of nature against his sinful authority, his present inability to control or even to use the earth now groaning with him and travailing as in pain and in rebellion together with its discrowned lord, may in some degree make manifest the mingled dignity and tenderness of his original dominion. In like manner, the prophetic hints which are given us in the imagery of deserts blossoming as roses, and of lions going forth with lambs under the the gentle leadership of children in the millennial age, show us graphically what that primitive authority was. We may fitly regard it as an enthronement and gracious crowning of humanity, in order to the perfect realization of the divine purpose and ideal.

How glorious a being was man, as thus endowed with rational faculties, robed in righteousness and true holiness, made the steward of God on earth, and vested with a regency which was limited only by his primary relations to Deity! Surely it is not wise to set aside this biblical and confessional view of man as created, and to substitute for it any of those naturalistic theories which, in order to subvert the biblical doctrine of a moral fall from this lofty primeval condition, represent man rather as starting from some low estate of savagery, gradually accumulating mental capacity and acquiring knowledge of himself and his earthly environment, and slowly and painfully developing through long ages into his present estate of comparative maturity. To say nothing of the radical conflict between such theories and the biblical records, many considerations will arise in our further study of the moral condition and experience of mankind, to show that these theories are on both philosophic and ethical grounds untenable. It is sufficient here to note, first, the low estimate which is thus put upon man and his moral endowments; secondly, the evidences afforded by human history of extensive moral lapses in the career of men and races; and thirdly, the witness of Christian experience, not to a spiritual development from antecedent germs of character, but to a moral restoration or renovation such as certifies in consciousness to the dreadful reality of that antecedent moral fall which the Word of God faithfully describes.

Equally inadmissible is it to regard the primeval man as a characterless being in whom only mere possibilities existed, and who was left to shape a sphere and career for himself under the action

of interior impulses or outward currents of motive, with no positive tendency to holiness in his nature. The profoundest philosophy of human nature leads rather toward some such conception as is here presented on the authority of the inspired Word. Here also the Confessions of the Reformation are essentially agreed. Man, affirms the Formula of Concord, (Art. I) was created of God in the beginning pure and holy and free from sin. Man, says the first Helvetic Confession, (VII) was the most perfect image of God on earth, and was made first among visible creatures, *sancte a Deo conditus.* Now concerning man, declares the Second Helvetic symbol (VII), Scripture teaches that he was at the beginning made good, according to the image and similitude of God, and was placed in paradise, and had all things subjected to him. God created man, says the Belgic Confession, (XIV) out of the dust of the earth, and formed him after his own image and likeness; good, righteous, and holy, capable in all things to will agreeably to the will of God. The Heidelberg Catechism affirms (6) that God created man good, and after his own image,—that is in righteousness and true holiness, that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love him, and live with him in eternal blessedness to praise and glorify him. We confesse and acknawledge this our God, says the Scotch Confession, (Art. II) to have created man, to wit, our first father Adam, to his awin image and similitude, to whome he gave wisdome, lordship, justice, free-wil, and cleir knawledge of himselfe, sa that in the haill nature of man there culd be noted no imperfectioun. Against this high and pure conception of the original state and character and mission of man, modern skepticism has certainly been able to urge no valid argument; it stands as a truth abundantly confirmed in the light of both reason and Revelation: Argyle, Primeval Man.

Accepting the doctrine of the Symbols as to the original constitution of man, physical, intellectual and moral, and to his peculiar place and position in nature, we are led to consider two further inquiries respecting him which logically present themselves for examination at this point.—The first of these is the question respecting the propagation of the race. Ignoring for the present the inquiry as to the extent to which sin may have affected the natural law of increase and disturbed its actual operations, we may simply note the universality of that law as seen in all vegetable and animal life, and specially as divinely ordained for man in the terse phrase, male and female created He them, and

4. Two specific questions: Origin of the Soul in Man: Immortality of Man on the earth.

in the positive injunction to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, through the divine benediction upon their marital union. God did not choose to replenish the earth with inhabitants after the similitude of our first parents by a continuous series of creative acts,—as he did not choose to preserve vegetable or animal life on the earth by that process. He chose rather to set up this special provision in and throughout the realm of nature, by which the succession of the original species of creatures should be preserved, so long as he should desire to continue such creatures in being. And man becomes the crowning illustration of that provision, living on in the organic unity of the race from generation to generation, while the individual man is continually dropping off as a withering leaf from the great tree of life. And it may well be noted here that a proper study and appreciation of this marvelous law and process sheds—as we shall fully see hereafter—a peculiar light not otherwise discernible upon some of the profoundest doctrines of Holy Writ.

Respecting the origin of the souls of men, subsequent to the original creative act, three theories have received consideration. Of these the first affirms the existence of the soul in some state of being antecedent to the present life,—transferred hither, as some have held, just as a gardener transplants a flower from an inferior soil to one more favorable to growth and fruitage,—or sent here, as others imagine, as criminals are sent to a prison in punishment for offenses committed in some anterior state of being. Neither form of this hypothesis contributes anything to the solution of the prime problem of the origin of the soul thus sent or transplanted; nor does the second aid us, as has been claimed, in explaining the universal and original sinfulness of mankind. Neither has any warrant whatever in Scripture or in human consciousness: both, and especially the second, involve very serious questionings as to the divine wisdom and righteousness in such a mysterious transference: Müller. Christ. Doct. of Sin. Current opinion is mainly divided between the two hypotheses of traducianism and creationism; the first affirming that souls are, as the term suggests, procreated simultaneously or in conjunction with the bodily organism; the second holding that souls are continuously created by God as bodies are fashioned to receive them, and are by divine volition incorporated individually in their physical habitations. A modified form of creationism, basing itself on the trichotomic analysis of man, regards the body and the soul as procreated physiologically while the spirit (pneuma) is placed in the developing organism by the direct act of Deity.

While some considerations, such as the analogies of nature elsewhere, the general transmission of physical traits from parent to child, especially the universal prevalence of sin as a taint in every procreated life, and also various intimations of Scripture, favor the former hypothesis, still very serious objections may be urged against it,—especially on the ground that it almost inevitably makes sin so much an element in the physical nature, so much an inherent force in the very constitution, as to impair greatly if not to destroy that consciousness of liberty and of consequent responsibility for sin, on which the Bible seems to rely fundamentally, alike in its faithful warnings against all transgression, and in its tender exhortations to obedience and holiness. That serious objections may be urged against the second hypothesis is also obvious,—objections which have led many Calvinistic divines especially in this age to prefer, notwithstanding all its difficulties, the traducian explanation. The creation of a soul that is constitutionally without sin, and its incorporation into a bodily organism which is tainted with the corruption of sin, is indeed an inexplicable mystery, and one which the wisdom and justice of God would seem to preclude,—yet hardly more inexplicable or startling than that God would establish an universal law of procreation by which at his own command souls tainted at their very genesis with sin constitutionally transmitted, are to be propagated through human action in conjunction with human bodies during countless generations. It is urged with justice that creationism as a theory tends to destroy our sense of the unity or solidarity of the race, and especially to impair our conviction of its universal corruption or depravity, as affirmed in Scripture,—yet this tendency which certainly every thoughtful mind must guard itself against, is hardly so dangerous as the opposite liability just named. The strongest argument practically in its favor is derived from the prevalent language of the Bible respecting each and every soul as immediately a creature and a child of God, first by nature and then through grace; and from the innate consciousness and conviction by which each and every soul is directly certified to itself, not as having been born through an impact first divinely given to our first parents and transmitted from them through all the generations, but rather as having itself been created by an immediate fiat of Deity.

Amid the perplexities arising from these antithetic hypotheses, it is not strange that Cicero, discussing the same problem in his Tusculan Questions, should say at last: Which of these explanations may be the true one, only some deity is able to discern. Nor is it strange that Augustine, after leaning at one time toward the

traducian and at another toward the creationist hypothesis—after saying that either both soul and body are alike derived in their corrupt state from man, or the soul being pure is corrupted by the body, as if in a corrupt vessel where it is placed by the secret (or inscrutable) justice of the divine law, should add: Which of these is true I would rather learn than teach, lest I should presume to teach what I do not truly know. From Jerome on one side and Tertullian on the other, down to our own age, the problem has been earnestly discussed, but remains as yet unsolved: Shedd, Hist. of Doct., Anthropology. Among the Scholastics creationism evidently found the greatest measure of favor: Anselm affirming that the claim that man receives his rational mind through conception is unproveable; Aquinas, that an immaterial substance such as the soul could only be produced by direct creation; St. Victor affirming it to be the true Catholic faith that souls are daily created de nihilo to be associated with living bodies; and Peter Lombard tersely adding, *Creando enim infundit Deus et infundendo creat:* Hagenbach, Hist. Doct.

Later Lutheran theologians, though the position of Luther himself is doubtful, generally favored traducianism, although the Formula of Concord expressly declares (Art. I) that God not only created the body and soul of Adam and Eve before the fall, but has also created our bodies and souls since the fall, though these are now corrupt, and now acknowledges our minds and bodies to be his creatures and his work. On the other hand many Calvinistic theologians of more recent date discredit creationism, although Calvin himself and his immediate successors such as Beza gave it the preference. Calvin indeed declines (Inst. B. I:I) to enter on what he describes as a tedious question (anxia disputatio) with which the Fathers were not a little perplexed, whether the soul of the son proceeds by derivation or transmission from the soul of the father; but adds that we ought not to regard the contagion of sin as caused or originating in the substance of either the body or the soul. He prefers to rest the fact of a corruption springing from Adam and transfused from parent to children in a perpetual stream, on a divine ordination whose nature he subsequently describes in part under the head of original sin; and quotes the striking sentence of Augustine, that neither the guilty unbeliever nor the justified believer generates innocent but guilty children, since the generation of both is from corrupted human nature. The Symbols cannot be quoted authoritatively in favor of either theory, though their teaching respecting the corruption of human nature constitutionally and hereditarily seems more in harmony

with traducianism,—especially as seen in certain phrases such as *the root of all mankind*, and such declarations as that original sin is *conveyed* from our first parents unto their posterity by *ordinary* or natural *generation:* L. C. 22. Yet there are not wanting other terms and statements respecting the soul as a divine creation, and the experience of the soul in the state of grace, which give some measure of countenance to creationism,—a fact which suggests the query whether there be not some important elements of spiritual truth in both hypotheses. This survey of opinion may fitly close with the following statement of Lotze in explication of the creationistic view: At the place where, and at the moment when, the germ of an organic being is formed, amid the coherent system of the physical course of nature, this fact furnishes the incitement, or the moving reason, which induces the all-comprehending One Being—present not otherwheres but even here—to beget from himself besides, as a consistent supplement to such physical fact, the soul belonging to this organism.

The second of these special topics is the speculative question whether, had our first parents remained sinless, they would have enjoyed an immortality on the earth. It is positively taught in the Symbols, that immortality in some form and under some conditions is an inherent endowment of the human soul,—God having created man with the intention that he should live henceforth forever. The dogma of an immortality secured only as a gift of grace, bestowed on the righteous alone, is nowhere suggested in Scripture, except in the special and higher Pauline sense of the term. It is also implied (L. C. 20) that man would, by rendering to God perfect and perpetual obedience according to the covenant of life, have had such immortality not in heaven but on the earth, *of which the tree of life is a pledge;* and physical death is directly represented (28) as one of the temporal consequences of his transgression, according to the curse originally pronounced upon him. To offset the physiological objections to this view, based on the fact that death was already in the world before the Adamic transgression,—that the human body like other animal organisms is in its own nature perishable,—and that the divine provision for the propagation of species, both animal and human, presupposes the death of progenitors in order to make room for their posterity, it has been held that the fruit of the tree of life standing in the midst of the garden, which Augustine described as a holy sacrament, would have been for man a perfect antidote to this general law of decay, and that his bodily organism by partaking of this preservative fruitage would have enjoyed perpetual vitality and perpetual

youth in this world. It is also claimed that the divine arrangement for the continuance of the race through physical propagation might have worked out quite otherwise if sin had not deranged and corrupted it, and also that the earth, if not blasted by sin, might have nourished on its broad surface an innumerable multitude of the posterity of Adam. May it not be that what we call death, whenever occurring, would have been to a holy race simply a natural and blessed transference from an earthly to some celestial life—a transference which would carry with it no taint of pain or trial? May it not be that death, being in the world as a universal fact, was utilized after the fall as an expression of the divine feeling toward sin, and was so altered and shadowed by attendant pains and miseries as to make it a fit emblem or type of the spiritual death in which sin finds its dreadful consummation,—God using it in this way just as he used the rainbow, which must always have been a glorious vision in nature, as a sign of his gracious promise to mankind after the flood? And is it not in some degree a confirmation of this view, that under the Gospel death is again transformed, glorified and gladdened, and made to the true Christian the very gate of heaven; God leaving the dark fact, but graciously changing its nature and meaning, as an element in the new economy of redemption?

5. Probation: Man under law: His ability and mutability.

As thus created and endowed, man was by the nature of the case a being under law. What is more specifically described as probation, under the covenant of life or covenant of works, is not to be regarded as itself initial, but rather as a special exhibition or aspect of a more broad and fundamental fact—that man from the first instant of his existence was a being under moral as well as natural law. The existence of a moral law, with its eternal principles of right and its divine authoritativeness,—a law adjusted to the nature and position of man, and capable of guiding him into a state of matured spiritual perfection,—was as indispensable to him as the existence of a material world suited to his bodily nature and development. The principles embodied in that law were as eternal as God: they had their origin in his own perfect nature. Their incorporation in the forms of law for the creature were coincident, so far as man was concerned, with the creation of the being whom they were to govern. Law existed thus when man began to exist; from the first instant of his conscious ethical life he was under law. Duties at once devolved upon him; a moral stewardship,

consciously exercised, laid its claim upon his reason and his conscience; he knew that the Being who made him was also sovereign over him, and was as such to be implicitly and unreservedly obeyed.

This conception of moral law as primary and fundamental in the life of our first parents is indispensable to a proper appreciation of the particular transaction described as *the covenant of works.* To regard the specific enactment then set up and disobeyed, as the only moral precept which man knew or could obey,—to conceive of him as acting prior to the period of the particular temptation and fall, without consciousness of his responsibility to God, in a spontaneous mood of love and devotion, is unwarranted by Scripture. The Symbols clearly recognize the important distinction between the primal condition of man as under law, and the historic transaction which introduced sin into the world. It is declared (IV:ii) that our first parents at their creation had *the law of God written in their hearts,* as really as they had the power to fulfill it. In the chapter on the Law of God (XIX) it is further affirmed that Adam was bound from the first to personal, *entire, exact and perpetual obedience.* It is also said that *beside* this law written on their hearts, they *received a command* not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the chapter on the Fall (VI) it is further intimated that the law preceded the command, and that the latter was simply one part or section of the former,—the fundamental duty of obedience being revealed and tested by the specific requisition, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: L. C. 20–21.

The *power to fulfill* such comprehending law, or to obey it fully, was a necessary correlative to the law itself. Had no such power been granted to man—had he been created without the faculty of moral volition, or set in a position where that faculty could not be exercised, he would have been no more amenable to such ethical law than the brute creatures over whom he wielded dominion. Ability and obligation were parallel and commensurate here. The elements of such ability, then as now, were rational perception of the law enjoined, moral appreciation of it, and the purpose and choice of obedience to it. The power to fulfill included the power to perceive and the ability of conscience to feel the pressure of ethical claims, as well as the natural capacity to accept and observe each divine demand. It implied also the existence of external occasions and conditions requisite to the right and effective exercise of these powers. This faculty or capability is further defined in the phrase, *natural liberty* (IX: i) or liberty engrafted

upon or incorporated in the nature. It is also distinctly set forth in the chapter on Free Will, in the declaration that man in his state of innocency *had freedom and power to will and to do* that which is good and well-pleasing to God. This affirmation was indeed a necessary consequence from the Augustinian position already affirmed respecting the nature and tendency of man as originally holy: being constituted righteous, and thus set toward a career of holiness, he must have possessed all the faculties requisite to the prosecution of such a career.

It is hardly needful to enter here upon any extended investigation of the nature of the primeval man as a moral being. If he was made in the image of God, after the divine likeness, endowed with an original bias toward righteousness, and fitted for true holiness in heart and life, he must have possessed in high degree all the moral endowments requisite to such an experience. He must have had clear reason to discern the divine law of right, and to judge between what is right and what is wrong in action and disposition. He must have had a conscience which responded quickly to such discernment with corresponding ethical feeling—approval and joy in view of the right obeyed, and shame and the sense of spiritual pain in view of even the possibility of wrong. He must have had the natural liberty to follow the judgment of the reason and the pure impulses of conscience, and the power to choose the right and to act accordingly, in a sphere of experience far above the compulsions or determinations of external nature. Whatever speculative questions may arise at this point respecting the essential nature of the reason or the conscience or the free will in the primeval man, we may safely accept the statement of fact here given as entirely conclusive, and as sufficient for all practical uses in our present investigation.

Yet mutably, so that he might fall from it, is the antithetic declaration of the Symbols. This is defined (IV: ii) in the more ample phrase, *yet under a possibility of transgression*, being left to the liberty of their own will, *which was subject to change*, or (L. C. 17) *subject to fall*. Such a statement indicates the broad difference between the original righteousness, the true holiness, already affirmed as having been given to man at his creation, and the higher type of holiness seen in God himself or in angelic existences. The pure will of God is not subject to change; even the possibility of transgressing law hardly seems to exist in such a Being; he cannot lie or deceive or forswear himself. The angels who have never sinned, in the act of keeping their holy estate have attained a degree of spiritual perfection from which any

large possibility of transgression seems to be excluded. It is said, however, (L. C. 16) that even the angels though they were spirits, immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge and mighty in power, were at their creation *subject to change*—a statement which appears to warrant the inference that such exposure to a lapse into transgression and sin is an inevitable condition of finite existence. In the state in which our first parents were placed, this possibility certainly existed: their will, though holy, was like the angelic will, subject to change; the shadow of moral mutability hung darkly over them. The center of this mutability is here located in the will, yet it doubtless extended through all their moral nature, and was as vital a fact in the understanding and conscience as in their volitional power. In these statements the foundation is laid for the emphatic teaching of the Symbols at a later stage respecting the human rather than the divine authorship of sin, and the consequent culpability and condemnation of the race on account of transgression. The abstract question, how can a holy being ever fall into sin, is here answered by pointing to the mutability of man as a being finite, undeveloped, essentially weak in the presence of strong temptation. To seek to discover the cause of the first sin outside of the defection of the human will, says Augustine, is as if one sought to see darkness or hear silence. To the further question, why God has chosen to create a race thus mutable and exposed to fall, the chief suggestions in the Symbols point toward a necessity lying in the constitution of man as finite and immature, and in the relations of temptation to the perfecting of holy character through grace. May it not be that a creature, a race, in whom such character is finally to be developed, must of necessity start from this point of mutability, being made subject to change, and therefore commencing its moral career under the possibility of transgression?

6. Covenant of Life: Its nature, conditions, and objects.

Holding in view this general conception of man as in the nature of things a being under law generically and comprehensively, we may proceed to consider the specific transaction involving his actual temptation and fall, which is described (L. C. 20. S. C. 12) in the phrase, *covenant of life*—a phrase which signifies a life, or a mode of living, under some ethical regulations divinely prescribed and voluntarily observed. It has its foundation not so much in a formal compact in which God and man act as equal parties, and which man might be at liberty to accept or reject when proposed to him, but rather in the enduring nature and relationship of both God and

man as moral beings, and therefore existing as of necessity. The phrase, *covenant of works*, more widely current in later Calvinistic theology, also occurs repeatedly in the Confession, but carrying substantially the same significance, as in Ch. VII: i–iii, and also Ch. XIX: i, where the law given to Adam is described as a covenant by which Adam and all his posterity were *bound to personal, entire, exact and perpetual obedience.* It is noticeable that the instituting of such a special relation is referred in the Symbols, not immediately to the primary demand for moral government and a moral training for man, but rather to the voluntary condecension of God toward his earthly subjects, and to the divine desire to give them ampler *fruition of him as their blessedness and reward.* It is said (VII: i) that, so great is the *distance between God and the creature*, that although obedience is by the nature of the case due from the creature to him, the joy and fullness of such obedience could never be possessed, except through some more close, explicit, intimate transaction, such as that recorded in the narrative of the Fall, and theologically described as the covenant of life or of works. Stated generically, it is certainly true that the largest appreciation and enjoyment of God become possible, not through a merely general submission of ourselves to his authority, but rather through the cordial doing of his will in the most specific details. His rewards of obedience are specific as well as freely given; and they become specific only as they are seen to follow specific acts of loyalty and of love. Yet we are not at liberty to dissociate the particular transaction here to be considered from its primordial relations to the comprehending law under which man was placed, at the outset of his moral existence. Underneath the particular covenant of works or of life, or the covenant of law, as the Irish Articles describe it, lay continually the broad fact that all human works were also duties, and that the human life was true life, and especially indefectible life, only as it became throughout in the deepest and most absolute sense a life in God.

We are confronted at this point by the dark problem as to the divine intention in the instituting of this special covenant — a problem already suggested, and one which in various forms will again and again confront us. The statements just quoted represent it as the purpose of God to bestow upon man in this way larger *fruition of himself*, and therefore higher blessedness than man could otherwise have reached. God sought, in other words, to lessen the *distance* between man and himself, and to give to man wider opportunity both to glorify him and to enjoy him forever. Was this really the divine purpose? Was this transaction, from

which in fact the fall with all its disastrous consequences resulted, intended to be a covenant unto *life*,—a transaction whose legitimate issue would have been an enlarged religious experience and joy as a reward forever? These declarations are certainly not favorable to the supralapsarian conception of the fall, as a predetermined event in the same sense as creation itself. They lead us rather to the difficult alternative of a loving intention of God frustrated for the time—a divine plan for the higher cultivation of man, and the closer union of the race with himself in moral fellowship and blessedness, brought to naught temporarily by the mutable will and spiritual weakness of the very creature on whom he was seeking to bestow these larger benefits. Certainly an original intention that Adam should fail in carrying out the divine desire as expressed in this transaction—an original purpose that he should rather fall, with such consequent adjustment of all the details as to make the issue sure as the Will that chose it, is a supposition which seems to do violence to our purest conceptions of God, and seriously to shake our faith in his moral administration.

The conditions revealed in this transaction are the specific prohibition on the one side, and the specific requisition of obedience on the other. Of the reasons for precisely such a prohibition, the Symbols say nothing; they simply state the fact—the forbidding to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The test was certainly plain, direct, equitable, practical; suited in every way to the nature and circumstances of those to whom it was to be applied. It was simply, in the language of an eminent American divine (Hodge), an outward and visible test to determine whether Adam was willing to obey God in all things. In the strong language of the Welsh Calvinistic communion: The law of our nature was all contained in this covenant, so that it was impossible to transgress the special command of the covenant without transgressing at the same time the entire law of our nature. Of the character of the obedience required, nothing is said beyond the fact that it was to be free and cordial and perpetual—such obedience as was due from such beings to their Creator and their Sovereign. It is said that as a reward of such obedience *life was promised to Adam* so long as the obedience was *personal and perfect*. This pledge of life is synonymous with that *fruition of God* already described as the object in view in the instituting of this special test. It is to be noted that this promise is nowhere stated in Scripture, though it is doubtless implied,—God in this as in all other moral discipline graciously appending assurances of his approbation wherever true obedience is rendered. While it is not

the right or privilege of an obedient soul to demand compensation for duty done—while even angels can urge no claim for reward in view of their holiest service, it still is inherently just in God to bestow such reward, and what inherent justice does not forbid, paternal love and grace rejoice to bestow.

If this probationary transaction be described as a *covenant*, as is done in the Symbols and in the later Calvinistic theology largely, care must be taken to guard against some false impressions which the term naturally conveys. A covenant, in ordinary language, is a contract or an agreement or a bargain, in which the parties are acting essentially on the basis of equality, with mutual arrangement of conditions and results. Each agrees to the stipulations appended: each obligates himself freely, under the terms proposed. But here Adam had no choice, either as to the general administration set up over him as a moral being, or to the particular command imposed upon him; he did not formally and freely assent to the penalty threatened or select the rewards of obedience. His part in the transaction included only the specific exercise of his personal capacity for choice, in the moral position in which he found himself placed by the divine sovereignty. It may indeed be presumed that, finding himself set in the center of such moral alternatives, Adam did freely acquiesce in the probationary arrangement thus made, and did cordially yield obedience for a time to the simple command imposed upon him. Yet the transaction can be viewed as a covenant only in a restrictive sense; and it may justly be questioned whether the use of this conception for theological purposes has not been extended in later times quite beyond the boundaries of biblical affirmation or warrant. It was indeed natural that the revelation of a gracious covenant established between Christ and the believer,—a covenant in which elements of human assent, free and tender and loyal, are seen to be primary and fundamental, should lead on to this affirmation of a covenant of substantially the same nature, exhibiting itself under an administration of works,—historical redemption in the form of a covenant between God and man after the fall, suggesting a similar relation between them under the same form before the fall. It may also freely be admitted that the Cocceian conception of the entire dealing of God with man under the aspect of a series of covenants, was an improvement in some respects upon the more speculative conception of a series of eternal decrees, or of one comprehensive and fontal decree, of which all events in time were simply the irresistible growth and fruition. This new presentation of the subject in an historic light, bearing the name of Cocceius as

its chief exponent, but to some extent known and accepted before his day in both Holland and Scotland, had risen into considerable prominence as early as the era of the Assembly: Dorner, Hist. Prot. Theology. And the Westminster divines were obviously conscious of the relief thus afforded from the fatalistic impression almost inevitably conveyed by the older Calvinism, through such philosophic and abstract rather than historic presentation. But it is probably true that they followed the tendency of the Reformed theology of their time in elaborating the doctrine of the covenants, as the federal school had done, to a degree beyond what either the language or the inferential suggestions of Scripture would warrant. At least, while stating with marked fullness those elements in this probationary transaction which liken it to a human covenant, they cannot be said to have pointed out with equal fullness those broad differences which separate it radically from all compacts or agreements of men: See Ball, Covenant of Grace.

This will be more apparent if we consider in a preliminary way what is taught in the Symbols respecting the relations of this transaction to the posterity of Adam. Without forestalling at this point their general teaching as to original sin, we may note their description of Adam as head of the race, and as covenanting in that capacity for his descendants as well as for himself. It is said (XIX) that *God bound him and all his posterity* under the obligation of exact and perpetual obedience; and that life spiritual and indefectible was promised to him, and *in him to his posterity*, on condition that such obedience should be rendered. He is described as a *public person* (L. C. 22), and as entering into covenant *not for himself only*, but for all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation. Our first parents are further represented, (Chap. VI:iii) as *the root of all mankind*, and consequently as involving the entire race in the retributive issues flowing from their personal failure under the divine testing. Such expressions, while they suggest the general problem just named, (which will be more fully considered at a later stage) press upon us at this point the particular question; In what sense and to what extent did Adam thus act representatively?

7. Reach of this probation: Adam how far a Public Person: representation.

It is granted by those who advocate specially the doctrine of the covenants, that we have in the biblical record itself no positive intimation that our first parents were conscious of any such representative relation under the divine law, or that they did in fact consent to act for their entire posterity, or agree that their

descendants to the end of time should be legally bound to face the penal issues of their personal failure under the primitive probation. It is admitted (Hodge, Theol. II:217) that the confessional statement that God entered into covenant with Adam, even in the limited personal rather than the official or representative sense, does not rest upon any express declaration of Scripture. There is in fact, (Smith. H. B. Christ. Theol. 378) a lack of historical foundation for anything beyond the divine announcement and pledge in respect to the consequences of obedience and disobedience. Yet it is claimed that the covenant of grace implies such an antecedent and antithetic covenant of works, having like representative quality. Reference is made to retributive consequences that have in fact flowed down upon the posterity of Adam through the Fall, as implying an agreement on his part to accept such consequences; and it is inferred that, since in Adam all died. he willingly consented that his descendants should each and all die in the event of his failure to keep the law. It is also argued that this species of federal or representative headship underlies all the providential dealing with mankind, and that men recognize it as just by incorporating it extensively in human law. And on such grounds it is affirmed that Adam acted not in his individual capacity merely, but as the legal or federal as well as natural head and representative of the race,—entering thus into direct covenant with God for them as fully as for himself.

It is certainly a suggestive response to this claim to say that no such doctrine appears in the Institutes of Calvin, or in any of the earlier theological systems accepted in the Reformed churches, and that when the Cocceian view was first formulated, it was regarded by the earlier Calvinists as questionable if not erroneous. The affirmation that the headship of Adam, in this sense of that phrase, has entered into the faith of all Christian churches, and is more or less clearly presented in all their authorized symbols (Hodge, II: 122) is one which rests on inadequate historical foundations. It is true that the symbols of the Reformation generally maintain, in opposition to the false conception of individualism in its various guises, the moral unity of the race, and the special relationship of our first parents by virtue of which the race became involved organically in the consequences of their transgression. But it is also true that no confession, prior to that of Westminster, represents this connection as forensic and representative rather than natural; and that the introduction of the doctrine of legal representation marks a distinct stage in the development of historical Calvinism—a stage which certainly brought with it some impor-

tant improvements, but which can hardly be regarded as the consummating step in that development. It is also a noticeable fact that the conception of a representative and legal covenant, though incorporated in the Westminster Symbols, has never been able to win its way to universal acceptance; and that many of those who hold it are now inclined to rest the legal upon an antecedent natural headship, while in some quarters there is a decided return to the older conception of Calvin and his immediate disciples: Shedd. Dogm. Theol.

But, whatever may be said respecting the theological statement of a federal covenant, no thoughtful mind can be indifferent to the underlying fact that the probation of our first parents was intended to reach their posterity, and did in some way involve in its dark issues the entire race. Though the proof texts appended to the Confession and Catechisms can hardly be said to establish the particular propositions with which they are associated, they clearly justify the broader statement just made, and demonstrate beyond question the moral unity of the race, and the ordained community of all in sin and in condemnation. This is the generic doctrine common to both the earlier and the later Calvinism, and those who are not satisfied with the positive teaching of the Symbols as to the covenant of works, still receive with utmost cordiality the great underlying truth. Nor do they reject the clearly biblical doctrine of a blessed covenant of grace, or question at any point the spiritual oneness established between Christ and his chosen, though they fail to discover in Scripture adequate evidence of a corresponding transaction antecedent to the economy of redemption.

8. The Fall: the divine decree permitting sin: God not its author.

Further discussion of the question may be postponed until we have occasion to examine current theories of original sin on the one hand, and corresponding theories respecting the plan of salvation on the other. We may now turn to contemplate the Fall as an event occurring under the eternal decree, and carrying with it the dark problem respecting the divine permission of sin. What has already been said as to the different views presented in the Assembly touching the divine purpose or purposes, and the various aspects of the decrees of God as absolute or permissive, need not be repeated here. Whether the majority of the members were sublapsarian or supralapsarian, it is clear that the doctrine of a single decree, primal in eternity, fontal in relation to all events, and sovereign and irresistible in its unfolding, had great weight in determining

the form in which the fact of the Fall was conceived and described. Yet it is evident that the Fall itself viewed as a historic fact was not regarded as included in this one timeless decree, in the same sense and measure as the antecedent fact of creation, or the subsequent fact of salvation. Consequently in approaching this historic fact it became needful to conceive rather of this decree as plural—as unfolding itself in a series of *wise and holy acts*, wherein the divine relation to the result is seen to be not single but multiform; not always necessary and absolute, but sometimes relative and in a sense conditional. While therefore, theoretically, supralapsarianism seemed to become the regulative dogma in the case, the sublapsarian modification was practically requisite, in order to defend adequately the divine administration in the permission of the first sin. Hence it was said as to that originating sin, that *God was pleased* (VI:i) according to his own wise and holy counsel *to permit it,—having purposed* in connection with such permission *to order it to his own glory*. In the chapter on Providence it is in the same way affirmed that this wise, potent, good providence of God *extendeth itself even to the first Fall*, as well as to all other sins of angels and men. Yet the relation of the divine volition to the first sin and to all subsequent sin as a fact must be, in some important aspects, vitally different from its relation either to inanimate nature or to the holiness of moral beings. It cannot be said that God provides sin although he foresees it—provides it as he makes provision for food or raiment or for a scheme of salvation. To assert this would be to affirm that he is both the author and the approver of sin; but this, it is said, he *neither is nor can be*. The doctrine of his personal perfection is to be maintained at whatever cost; and certainly any causal relation to human sinfulness, wherein God was seen to be in any direct sense its author, would seem to be grossly inconsistent with such perfection.

But what constitutes a permissive decree? What are the exact relations of the Deity to sin, and how can his permission of sin be justified? Certainly not on the ground of ignorance, whether constitutional or voluntary. It is impossible to conceive of God as choosing not to know what are to be the free acts of his moral creatures, without admitting that he must first know what he determines to be ignorant of: otherwise it becomes impossible to regard his choice of ignorance as wise or righteous. To imagine him constitutionally ignorant,—setting up a moral system whose progressive developments he could know only as they were to be revealed in time, and whose outcome he could therefore not have

perceived from the beginning or even perceive now, is to fancy him, in the phrase of the psalmist, altogether such an one as ourselves. We cannot admit in either form the supposition that God did not know beforehand whether the Fall would occur, or what consequences would follow it through the disordered constitution and experience of our race. The Symbols therefore, at all hazards, affirm the full foreknowledge of God respecting sin, and his intelligent allowance of it. *God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions*, it is said in the chapter on the Eternal Decree; neither has he *decreed anything because he foresaw it as future*—something that would occur independently of his determination, or that would turn upon conditions existing or supposed, outside of and above himself. It is expressly said (L. C. 19) that God by his providence *permitted some of the angels* willfully and irrecoverably *to fall into sin* and damnation; and that this providence (V:iv) *extendeth itself even to the first Fall*, and all other sins of angels and men.

These statements clearly imply not merely a foreknowledge of all events whether evil or good as future, but also a species of causal relation to them, so that in some sense they occur through divine determination as well as through simple consent. The will of God was certainly underneath the will of our first parents, as well when they transgressed as when they obeyed the divine commands: as a sustaining energy God is underneath the volitions of the sinner, as well as those of the noblest saint. His hand did not in that dark hour drop our first parents out of existence, or abandon its supervisory control over them: it does not withdraw itself even when the apostate soul is disobeying and cursing the very power that keeps it in being. God upholds even the lost; and it may be among the sorest of their pangs that they know themselves to be kept in existence perpetually by the Being from whom they have revolted utterly and forever. Sin is thus not the creation of man as wholly independent of God; a divine permission underlies it, as the divine power underlies all things, all events—everything that is human. While God never creates in man a sinful volition, he creates and sustains man as a being capable of putting forth such volition. God powerfully bounds, and in many ways restrains the sinful propensities of men; but he does not take away these propensities, or set man in circumstances where free action becomes impossible and holiness is compulsory, or transform him into an irrational creature, wholly incapable of sinning. He does not prevent sin, as he might, by destroying the sinner at once and forever: rather for wise and holy

ends he permits the sin as a dread alternative, though he neither is nor can be its author or approver.

Nor can it be said that in such permission God is acting under a law of necessity, either natural or spiritual. Reference has already been made to the speculative theory that, on natural grounds, it seems impracticable to create a moral being, endowed as Adam was, and to set him in such a probationary sphere as that of Eden, without making sin somewhere in the unfolding life of such a being, not only a possibility but even a dreadful certainty. More broadly it has been maintained that to our finite apprehension the creation not of a single being, but of a race of moral creatures, all thus endowed and thus exposed, seems an act involving by natural necessity the probable if not the certain fall of some among the myriads of such free yet immature existences. Other theorists have turned their thoughts in the opposite direction, and affirmed —as we have seen—that sin, though not in itself good, is an essential condition of the highest good for the moral universe; or more specifically that it was only through the admission of such sin as an antecedent, that the world could have known Christ, or tasted the peculiar bliss of salvation through him. Yet the great problem cannot be fully solved through any such conceptions of necessity, natural or spiritual, constraining God either to refrain altogether from the creation of moral beings, or to consent as by a species of compulsion to the existence of moral evil in the universe which had emanated, beautiful and pure, from his creative hand. There surely was freedom in that consent; it was a real permission and purpose—in some sense a decree. Yet with this permissive decree involving such sad issues, there was also a supreme determination, as the Symbols strongly affirm, that what was thus allowed should finally be ordered *to his own glory*.

To this conclusion, which is little more than a confession of ignorance on one side and an affirmation of faith on the other, not only the Westminster teaching but Protestant symbolism generally leads us. The Augsburg Conf. (XIX) declares that not God but the will of the wicked is the sole cause of sin; and the Formula of Concord teaches that, though man by his own choice becomes a sinner, no power but that of God can control or cure the evil which sin has wrought. In like manner the Second Helvetic Conf. (VIII) refers the Fall wholly to the will of man and the temptation of Satan; yet affirms that God will not only justify himself in the permission of it, but will overrule it and make it subservient to his own glory and the magnifying of his grace in Christ. Such was the general position of the primitive Protestantism;

and though before the era of the Westminster Assembly, theologians and schools had suggested various solutions of the problem—as in later times—nothing better could be said then, or has been said since, than that God on the one hand has not only known that sin would occur, but has determined that in his providential scheme of things it shall have a place, while on the other hand he is still the master over it and all its consequences, and will so order all that at the end his own glory shall not be tarnished but rather made more illustrious thereby.

9. The Fall: Its historic quality: The primal temptation.

Turning from these more speculative inquiries, we may note the practical fact that the Fall is treated throughout the Symbols as neither mythical nor allegorical, but in a true and proper sense an historic event. Had the narrative in Genesis been merely an ancient tradition, treasured up in the memory and conviction of mankind, and at last transmitted orally or through antecedent documents to Moses for permanent preservation in the pages of inspired Scripture, it would still possess marked significance as a helpful though unauthoritative explanation of the most vital and appalling fact in human experience—the fact of existing sin. Had it been a mere allegory, sketched by Moses himself or some one else, and prefaced to the personal and tribal history he was preparing, it would still, in view of the extensive and profound impression made by it not only upon the thought but equally upon the life of mankind, stand forever first among possible human explanations of the evidently lapsed and degenerate condition of the race. But on either of these hypotheses, it would be impossible to explain the position and the marked effect of this narrative in the Scriptures. The constant assumption of its historic quality, the numerous inferences drawn from it in both the Old Testament and the New, the testimony of our Lord respecting it, the fundamental character of the doctrine taught by it, in its relations to the entire scheme of biblical doctrine, compel us either to accept the record as real history or to set aside the cardinal hypothesis of its inspiration. From this conclusion the diversified, shifting, largely naturalistic hypotheses of recent criticism have thus far justified no retrocession.

Assuming on such grounds the historic quality of the record, we may note briefly the incidents of the temptation and the fall. That sin came into our world from another, and was induced through the agency of a malevolent tempter, is directly stated. Our first parents, *being seduced by the subtilty and temptation of*

Satan (VI : i), sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. Although they existed from the first *under a possibility of transgressing*, and were as free beings *subject to change*, and were divinely placed in a position where these liabilities might work out disastrous results, yet the Symbols agree with Scripture in referring these results primarily to another world, and to preternatural influence emanating from a being other than human. It is said (V : v), that God even now *doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations;* and, also, in the same connection, that in his providence he sometimes gives wicked men over, not only to the innate action of their own lusts, but also to the temptations of the world, *and the power of Satan.* All men as fallen are declared (L. C. 27) to be not only by nature children of wrath, but also *bond-slaves to Satan:* and in the commentary on the first commandment (L. C. 105) we are warned against all *compacts and consulting with the devil, and hearkening to his suggestions*, as among the sins strictly and solemnly forbidden. And in the exhortation to *remember* the Sabbath (L. C. 121), we are taught that *Satan with his instruments do much labor to blot out the glory and even the memory of it*, to bring in all irreligion and impiety. It is also said in the chapter (XVII) on the Perseverance of the Saints that Christians may *through temptations of Satan and of the world*, fall into grievous sin; and in the chapter (XX) on Christian Liberty, it is said that such liberty consists partly in being delivered from *bondage to Satan* as well as from interior sinfulness. Among the specific humiliations of our Lord himself is named his conflicting with *the temptations of Satan*—with the terrors of death and the powers of darkness (L. C. 48–49); and one element in his exaltation is seen in his vanquishing not only death itself, but *him that had the power of it:* L. C. 52.

These extracts, together with others less conspicuous, bring into definite form the Westminster conception of Satan, and especially of his relations to the first sin and to all subsequent sins of men. The subject has already been introduced under the head of Creation, but calls for some further consideration here. Concerning the angels in general we are taught (L. C. 16) that God made them spirits immortal, holy, excelling in knowledge, mighty in power, . . . *yet subject to change*,—the possibility of falling away being thus incorporated in their structure as in that of our first parents. What has been described as a defectibility inseparable from finite and dependent nature, appears in their constitution as really as in that of man, though under different laws or forms of development. The lapse of some among the angels was

an event occurring, like the fall of man, within the providence of of God,—He by his providence permitting some of them *willfully and irrecoverably to fall into sin and damnation.* It is also affirmed that he limits and orders their fall and all their sins to his own glory, while he *establishes the rest in holiness and happiness*,—meanwhile at his pleasure employing them all, both good and evil, as the language implies, in *the administration of his power, mercy and justice.* In the chapter on the Eternal Decree the same species of predestination which is affirmed concerning mankind, is also affirmed respecting the angels both good and evil: By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his own glory, some men *and angels* are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death; *these angels* and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, being *particularly and unchangeably designed:* See the Irish Articles, 12, 20.

Whether the fall of some among the angels occurred long prior to the lapse of man, or in immediate conjunction with that lapse, and as the immediate occasion of the temptation to which man was subject, is a matter unrevealed; many considerations favor the latter hypothesis, though the former is more frequently accepted: Hickok, Humanity Immortal. In either case, we must recognize a fallen angel as the agent, executing in some sense a divine purpose, though engaged in the gratification of his own envious or malicious desires. The Formula of Concord affirms (I:13) that the devil cannot create any substance, but can only by way of accident, under the permission of the Lord, deprave a substance created by God. He brings sin malevolently into our world, and in that initial act institutes among men a dark and baleful dominion whose growth and issues constitute in large degree the history of humanity. It has been remarked that, as theological science advances, the place of Satan in theology is growing less and less prominent. But while this may be true, especially with reference to the relations of Satan to the atonement and to justification, no sound theology can be indifferent to the fact that such a malevolent agency exists, and from the beginning has been intimately associated with the sin and moral degeneration of man. To regard the conception as mythical or poetic is simply impossible: to treat it as trivial, is to ignore the strong and conclusive Pauline affirmations respecting the principalities and powers of evil who are battling in this world with the advancing kingdom of Christ. On this point the Protestant creeds are emphatic in their unanimity. The Confession of Augsburg affirms (XIX) that although God doth create and preserve nature, yet

the cause of sin is the will of the wicked; to wit, of the devil and ungodly men; which will, God not aiding, turneth itself from God. The Formula of Concord declares that sin springs from the devil—peccatum enim ex diabolo oritur—and from the depraved and evil will of man. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches (9) that God so made man that he could perform the law, but that man through the instigation of the devil, by willful disobedience deprived himself and all his posterity of this power: See Second Helvetic Confession, VIII: sed instinctu serpentis; Canons of Dort, diaboli instinctu . . . a Deo desciscens; First Scotch Conf. (III) slaves to Sathan, and servandis unto sin. It is, however, to the Westminster Symbols that we turn for the completest declarations touching the active relation of the Evil One, not merely to the primal sin, but to all other sins of men, to the trials and buffetings of saints, and even to the disciplinary experiences of our Lord. And in the thrice recorded account of his temptation at the hands of his arch enemy and ours, we have an analytic transcript not merely of the primitive trial and testing of our humanity in Paradise, but equally of all the malevolent workings of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, in the heart of that humanity from Eden down to the present age. The first temptation and the first lapse are continually repeating themselves in history, and will so repeat themselves until Satan is forever overthrown.

The specific incidents of the primal temptation wherein our first parents fell and the race in some deep sense fell with them, need not be detailed here. There is a simple truthfulness in the story which at once compels our belief in it, while its tragic elements constrain us to involuntary tears. The words of the tempter and his subtle reasonings, the beguiled interest of Eve, the surrender of Adam, the discovery of their sin and guilt, the instinctive fleeing from the divine presence, the summoning voice of an offended Deity, the confession and expulsion, and the wandering forth of the convicted pair to seek their existence henceforth, not amid the profuse luxuriance of Eden, but on the surface of an earth condemned and smitten in conjunction with their sin,—all this is profoundly real to the child and the philosopher alike, and as touching and tragic as it is real. Without it we could have no adequate knowledge either of that fallen estate into which humanity has evidently come, or of that scheme of grace which is revealed in Christ, and whose realization will be to humanity a paradise regained. They who deny the fall, or who regard the story as a poetic allegory simply, or some ancient tradition, can have no

adequate explanation of man as he is—no adequate historic basis for their hope respecting what man may through grace become.

While our first parents kept the command, they were *happy in their communion with God* and had dominion over the creatures. By their yielding to the temptation they, it is said, *fell from their original righteousness and communion with God*, (VI:ii) and became in consequence *dead in sin*, and wholly *defiled in all the faculties of soul and body*. They were thus plunged into *an estate of sin and misery*,—an estate whose sinfulness lay not merely in the absence of their original righteousness and in their proper condemnation, but also in the corruption of their entire spiritual nature,—an estate whose misery lay not merely in the loss of divine communion, but also in their exposure to punitive sufferings in the present life, to bodily death, and even to everlasting punishment: S. C. 17–19. The distinction between the inward and the outward consequences of sin in this life is emphasized in the Larger Catechism, (28); the former being enumerated as blindness of mind, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, hardness of heart, horror of conscience and vile affections; the latter including antithetically the curse of God upon the creatures for our sakes, and all other evils that befall us in our bodies, names, estates, relations and employments, together with death itself. In this enumeration we have not merely an interpretation of the primitive curse as seen in the expulsion of the guilty pair from Paradise and their subsequent doom to a career of labor and pain and sorrow, but also a comprehensive statement of the consequences of the Fall, as these have developed themselves in the life of their descendants through all the subsequent ages.

10. The consequent curse: sin and death: humanity and nature involved.

The triple or quadruple form of the original curse or condemnation—upon the man, upon the woman, upon Satan and the serpent as his instrument, and upon the earth as the changed abode of a fallen and sinful race—is simply suggested by casual phraseology in the Symbols. The Assembly may have regarded these specific matters as unnecessary in a general Confession: they may have discovered differences of opinion among themselves on some of these points which rendered a confessional statement impracticable. In respect to the consummating word, *death*, it is obvious that the Assembly contemplated both physical mortality and spiritual deadness,—the former as symbolic of the latter. Whether man would have continued in this world unchanged and immortal, or would have passed at some time into a higher

condition through some painless and ripening process, in marked contrast with physical death as we now behold it, they did not positively determine, though they evidently preferred the former supposition. But they justly recognized death, in the painful form in which it now occurs, as being the culminating aspect of the divine condemnation pronounced upon sin in this life,—all other ills in body or name, in estate or relation or employment, being subordinated to this concluding expression of divine wrath. Hence, following the Scriptures, they employed physical death as the most solemn emblem in nature of that degeneracy and decay into which sin plunges the soul: hence the significance of their impressive grouping of the inward consequences of sin, set over against those outward and material evils which under the verdict of God follow evermore both the original lapse and all succeeding transgression. That sin as a free act of man necessarily brought such a curse with it, and that this curse, displaying itself both in spiritual loss and corruption and in external ill, was a just as well as an inevitable issue of transgression, they were heartily agreed in affirming.

The fourfold distribution of the curse, though alluded to but casually in the Symbols, is deserving of particular consideration. Upon Adam specifically came the curse of labor, in the triple form of toil, humiliation and sorrow. His original supremacy over nature and all inferior creatures was now forfeited: his fair home in Eden was lost; he became a wanderer upon the surface of the earth, condemned to secure daily food amid its thorns and thistles by the sweat of his face, and with unceasing sorrow of heart,—humbled as dust henceforth in the presence of that nature over which he had heretofore been the divine vice-gerent. Upon Eve came, in addition to her share in the sentence pronounced upon Adam, and her prescribed humiliation as henceforth less the companion and more the servant of man, the special pain of child-bearing in forms fitted to remind her through all the future of her share in the guilt of the first trangression. We are not to suppose that the natural law of propagation was altered in consequence of the Fall, but simply that the process of parturition, heretofore comparatively painless, now became eminent among the severest forms of bodily anguish, and as such was selected as a suitable expression of the divine displeasure. Upon the serpent as the instrument of Satan in the temptation, came the humiliating mode of locomotion,—not indeed an actual change but simply a judicial characterization of an existing mode, as in marked contrast with the erect posture and movement of man, and as symbolic

of that greater humiliation and curse which were in the process of time to come upon the tempter himself, in view of his share in the fatal transaction. We discern also, in connection with this curse, that first Messianic promise with which the darkness of that hour of condemnation was illumined,—the divine assurance that the seed of the woman should yet bruise the head of the seducing angel, destroying his baleful influence over humanity and compelling him ultimately to crawl as a defeated and hated serpent in the world which he had sought to rule.

To the curse thus pronounced specifically upon each of the three parties in the transaction, there should be added the blight which came upon the earth itself, viewed as henceforth the abode of a sinful race, changing it from a paradise into a prison, suited to the effectual disciplining and the ultimate restoration of fallen man. The world was still to be his habitation, but it was to be so altered in its outward conditions and features as to correspond with the new type of moral administration and training which sin had rendered necessary. How extensive that change was in range or character we have no knowledge, except what is suggested in the Pauline phrase respecting the physical earth as groaning and travailing with pain together with sinful man, and the bright pictures of prophecy respecting deserts blossoming with roses, and peace and beauty filling the world in the day of human redemption. But we are assured that sin created the necessity for a new system of government over man as fallen, a system less paternal than that of Paradise, more marked by checks and chastisements and forms of retribution, yet designed to save from utter destruction and ultimately to restore to divine favor a race now through transgression estranged from God. Adam was henceforth to be treated as a faithful father would treat an undutiful son—as a just yet humane sovereign would treat his rebellious subjects, in order to bring them back to loyalty. The dignity of violated law must be maintained; the right of administration must be upheld; chastisement and even retribution must be introduced, since herein lay the only possibility of restoration. The very earth must be utilized as one instrumentality in this disciplinary and restorative process: the very ground must be cursed for the sake of man, in order that it might thus become a schoolmaster to bring him back to loyalty in Christ. Nor is this provision to be regarded as vindicatory only. God still loved the hapless pair whom he was constrained in equity to condemn, and we may well believe that the earth was no more wild or sterile or dark than infinite wisdom and infinite mercy permitted it to become: McCosh, Divine Gov.

Here we reach the interesting question, more than once appearing in the Assembly, respecting the mode and nature of the transmission of the sinfulness and the condemnation thus incurred, from our first parents to their posterity,—in other words, their theory of *original sin*. Calvin adequately defines the phrase (Inst: Book II: Chap. I) as the depravation of a nature previously good and pure; or more fully, an hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul, rendering us obnoxious to the divine wrath, and producing in us those works which the Scripture calls works of the flesh. This pravity or corruption occurred to our first parents as an immediate consequence, and as a proper punishment of their transgression. While externally they were punished with the withdrawal of the divine favor and fellowship, and by an accumulation of earthly ills in person and estate, they also became retributively *defiled in all the faculties of soul and body* by a process of inward corruption, and thus, in apostolic phrase, became truly dead in sin. And the Symbols affirm that this depravation or deadness was in some way transmitted to all their posterity, and is to be viewed as an expression in their case also of the divine disapproval of sin, and an evidence of the universal liability to the wrath and curse of God. Was this transmission, in the judgment of the Westminster divines, natural or forensic; and was this liability regarded by them as immediate or mediate?

11. Original sin: theories of transmission: the essential fact.

Many expressions in the Symbols seem to justify the conception of a natural, or organic and constitutional, transmission of the original sin or sinfulness, and of a guiltiness, or amenability to law, directly consequent upon the possession of this corrupted nature. This was the form which the doctrine had assumed in the earlier creeds, both Lutheran and Reformed. It was incorporated essentially in the Thirty-Nine Articles, and in the Irish Articles, both of which agree in defining original sin as, in the words of the latter, the fault and corruption of the nature of every person that naturally is engendered and propagated from Adam. So, in the Larger Catechism (25:26) original sin is described as consisting not merely in the guilt of the original offense, but also in the want of righteousness, the corruption of the moral nature, the disability toward spiritual good, and the dominating inclination of the soul toward evil. And this depravation of the whole man is further said to have been *conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation*. The language of the Shorter Catechism

(16) presents the same view:—all mankind descending from him *by ordinary generation*, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. With this agrees the Confession (VI) in the declaration that our first parents, *being the root* of all mankind . . . the same corrupted nature is *conveyed* to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. In all these phrases it is a natural or constitutional process which is affirmed, rather than a legal and formal imputation. The language used conforms almost literally to the declaration of Calvin: Adam was not only the progenitor but the root of mankind, and therefore all the race were necessarily vitiated in his corruption . . . His transgression not only procured misery and ruin for himself, but also precipitated our nature into similar destruction. . . . From a putrefied (or corrupted) root have sprung putrid (or corrupt) branches, which have transmitted their putrescence (pravity) to remoter generations.

The phrase, *the guilt of this sin was imputed*, going before the clause just quoted, respecting the conveyance of a corrupt nature by natural or ordinary generation, has been interpreted as indicating the approval by the Assembly of the doctrine, then comparatively novel, of a judicial rather than natural transaction—a procedure in law, in which each descendant of Adam is first viewed as guilty, and is then visited retributively through the infliction upon him of this vitiated moral nature. This judicial procedure has been regarded as a necessary accompaniment of the Cocceian conception of a covenant of works, viewed as antithetic to the covenant of grace,—a covenant in which Adam literally acted under law for the race as their appointed representative, and in which he formally obligated them to meet and share with him in the retributive issues consequent upon his failure. It has been supposed that such a judicial transaction better explains the historic transmission of sin and corruption that followed the fall, by thus placing the guilt first as a legal fact, and then regarding the transmission as a retributive consequence of the guiltiness so imputed. It has also been claimed that we gain in this way some relief from the impression of sinfulness as constitutional, organic, hereditary, and consequently not properly a matter for which each individual soul can be held responsible before God, since it is through his peculiar organization of the race that such sin has thus been propagated. Reserving the full analysis of the dogma of imputation until it appears again in the imputation of our sin to Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to us as believers, it may be questioned here whether this forensic theory does

not in fact bring in difficulties even greater than those it proposes to remove. At least it forces upon the mind the query whether imputation of the guilt of one person to another, or of one person to millions upon millions of others, bound to him by the ties of natural descent merely, through a procedure so immediate and apparently so arbitrary, is either consistent with equity, or essential as an element in the general doctrine of sin propounded in the Symbols. Certainly, the older Protestant theory of natural headship, as set forth in the continental as well as the British creeds, has more distinctive warrant both in their language, and in the general drift of their teaching: See Conf. Augsburg, Art. II; Form. Concord, I; First Helv. VII–VIII; Second Helv. VIII; Cat. Heidelberg, 10; Belgic Conf. XV.

It may be questioned further whether the thoroughly Calvinistic conception of a vitiated nature, propense to sin and the root of all actual transgressions, introduced at this point as an intermediate or mediating factor, is not as much in harmony as either preceding view with the spirit if not with the letter of the Symbols. The Confession, for example, affirms (VI) that this corruption of nature existing in each descendant of Adam, *both itself and all the motions thereof, is truly and properly sin*,—as if our sinfulness began, not in a judicial imputation to us of the sin of Adam, or in some organic connection with the first transgression, but simply in the possession and the developments of this corrupted nature. To the same purport, it is declared in the section following, that original like actual sin—this corruption of nature as well as the motions thereof—*doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner.* Here, in the possession and in the workings of this nature, our guiltiness or amenableness to punishment most visibly commences. We cannot share literally in the guilt springing from the wrong action of another, even though he were our first parent; his act becomes the cause or occasion of our corruption, but it is in the corruption itself that our true guiltiness is seen to begin. Edwards in his treatise on Original Sin seems to suggest this view, in his statement that the sin of the apostacy of Adam does not rest on his posterity because God imputes it to them, but it is truly and properly theirs—theirs because, as he implies, they have the apostate nature, and on this ground God imputes it to them. The strong declaration that we all *sinned in him* as a person, as if in the words of Augustine we all were that one person, and *fell with him* in his transgression, as if his act were literally our act, must be interpreted in such manner as to preserve the proper distinction between him and his descendants severally, and also to

maintain their proper criminality for that sinful nature, and for those sinful acts which are specifically their own. For, there is great danger that, in such merging and confusion of separate personalities and personal acts, we shall either teach men that God is more responsible than they for their wrongdoing, or lead them otherwise into low and narrow views both of what God and his claims are, and of what they themselves are as his free and accountable creatures.

That the conception of an imputation which is mediate rather than immediate has some degree of warrant in the Reformed theology, is quite apparent. For example, Calvin (B. II : Ch. I), says that, our nature being so totally vitiated and depraved, we are on account of this very corruption considered as convicted and justly condemned in the sight of God. . . . This liableness to punishment arises not from the delinquency of another, for when it is said that the sin of Adam renders us obnoxious to the divine judgment, it is not to be understood as if we, though innocent, were undeservedly loaded with the guilt of his sin. But he is said to have involved us in guilt, because we are all subject to a curse, in consequence of his transgression. See also the French Confession, prepared largely by Calvin : Toute la lignée d'Adam est infectée de telle contagion qui est le péché originel, et un vice hereditaire . . Ce vice est vraiment péché. Other similar illustrations might be quoted without doing violence to the general Protestant doctrine on the whole subject. The Auburn Declaration, after affirming the fact that, while Adam was created in the image of God and endued with righteousness and true holiness, his posterity came into the world not only destitute of such qualities but inclined to evil, declines to make any theoretical explanation, but simply affirms (Art. III) that by a divine constitution Adam was so (in some way) the head and representative of the race that, as a consequence of his transgression (by some process), all mankind became morally corrupt and liable to death temporal and eternal. And if there be added to this the sound statement (Hodge, Theol. II : 211), that we have every reason to believe and hope that no human being ever actually perishes who does not personally incur the penalty of the law by his own actual transgression, the whole subject in its theoretic aspects may, without any wrong to the Symbols and their doctrine, be left to the adjudication of the individual judgment, guided by the teaching of Holy Writ.

But whatever may be the best interpretation of the Symbols as to the manner in which original sin is transmitted, and made the

fountain and origin of both actual transgressions and personal guilt,—whether indeed this is not an instance in which the divines of Westminster consciously admitted a variety of statements somewhat incongruous, in deference to the various opinions existing among themselves, there can be no question as to the clearness, the strength and cogency, of their generic teaching respecting the essential fact. They were not Pelagians, asserting only a corruption that flows down upon the race through mere contact and imitation. Nor were they partially Augustinian, recognizing a liability and an infection, but limiting sinfulness or exposure to retributive results, to personal action only. They held tenaciously to such unity and solidarity of the race under a divine constitution, as rendered certain an actual transmission of pravity in the nature, and the existence in each soul even from birth of such bias toward evil, such real inclination to sin, as involves from the first a true culpability and, apart from grace, certain condemnation. In other words, they affirmed as a fact what is beyond question a fundamental fact, however explained or inexplicable—a fact occurring directly under the divine constitution or appointment, and therefore to be reverently recognized and affirmed, in the presence of whatsoever difficulty. Further evidence of this will appear when we come to consider specifically their correlative conceptions of law and grace, as seen in the complete deliverance and moral restoration of the race through Christ.

12. Depravity defined: the essential fact: terms and phrases.

The spiritual condition into which mankind was thus brought through the Adamic connection, whether natural or forensic, immediate or mediate, is nowhere described in the Symbols by the theological term, depravity. Familiar as that term has become to us, in connection with the Calvinistic theology, there is some just ground for objection to its technical use; especially as it has now come in current speech to designate not a moral state common to all mankind, but a peculiar, special, intense measure of sinfulness in the individual man, particularly along the lines of sensuous indulgence or personal viciousness. But the moral state common to all men which the term was originally employed in theology to designate, is set forth in the Confession, (VI:iv) in language almost fearful in its breadth and impressiveness. It is generally styled *corruption*, and from it as from a defiled fountain we are all said in our natural estate to be *utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil.* The Larger Catechism, (25) adds the intensive phrase, *and that continually*, but happily

modifies the proposition of the Confession by the limiting clause, *all that is spiritually good.* The chapter on Free Will (IX), introduces the same limitation in the declaration that man has lost all ability of will to *any spiritual good accompanying salvation*—all power, in other words, to produce in himself any of those graces such as repentance, faith, regeneration, sanctification, which accompany salvation or are its proper signs and attendants. If therefore the term, depravity, is to be used in the exposition of the doctrine, special care must be taken to protect the confessional statement from perversion by the proper emphasizing of these modifying clauses, as was doubtless intended by the Assembly. The Free Church of Scotland in its recent Declaratory Act, seeks alleviation from the sweep of the confessional terminology by affirming that, although the whole nature of man is fallen and corrupt, there remain in him tokens of his greatness as created in the image of God. One is reminded by this statement of that impressive passage in one of the sermons of John Howe, in which he describes fallen man as a temple in ruins—a magnificent temple, though in ruins, on whose lofty front are still legible the solemn words,—Here God Once Dwelt.

Certain adjective terms in theological use in this connection also need to be carefully defined. When, e. g., this depravity is said to be *total* (totalis), it is not to be understood that every sinner is as bad as he can be, or that no amiable qualities remain in him, or that all sinners are alike and equally corrupted and defiled in sin, but simply that this spiritual corruption is not a matter of the will or of the conscience or the affections alone, but involves the whole moral man—he being thereby *defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.* The Formula of Concord expresses the same truth in the statement that original sin is no trivial corruption, but is so profound a corruption of human nature as to leave nothing sound, nothing uncorrupt in the body or soul of man, or in his mental or bodily powers. When this depravity is said to be *utter*, (outer, or out and out), what is affirmed is that this dread disorder has so pervaded the whole man, has so diffused itself throughout his nature, so suffused his entire moral being that, left to itself, it will only go on and on like some mortal disease, until at last the uttermost possibility, the outermost margin of sinfulness possible to the individual, will be reached. And when the term, *universal*, is used to indicate the fact that the entire race is involved in this dreadful corruption, similar discrimination should be made, such as will guard against certain injurious interences which might easily be derived from an affirmation so

sweeping. It should always be borne in mind that these, and such kindred expressions as, *dead in sin, wholly defiled, incapable of life, altogether averse from good, wholly inclined to all evil*, and others scattered through the Symbols, had a technical meaning in the apprehension of the Westminster divines and among the theologians of the Reformation generally, which is quite separable in thought from the impressions they now make in the ordinary speech of men. And certainly the preacher of our time cannot be too careful, while diminishing nothing from the awful solemnity of the truth itself, to avoid the use of terms or phrases which by conveying erroneous impressions may greatly weaken the claim of that truth on human belief and acceptation.

In the recent Revision several changes were proposed, looking not toward any abandonment of the essential doctrine, but toward the correction of false interpretations respecting it, such as the strong language of the Symbols has sometimes suggested. It was proposed, for example, to modify the phrase (VI : iv), *made opposite to all good*, by introducing the language found elsewhere, (L. C. 25) *all that is spiritually good;* by omitting the word *all* from the phrase, *wholly inclined to all evil*, on the ground that no individual transgressor, however corrupt, is wholly inclined to every sort of evil; by affirming that the providence and grace of God do in fact *not only restrain unregenerate men from much that is evil*, but also incline them to *exercise many social and civil virtues:* and by declaring (IX:iii) that the sinner is *indisposed to* rather than *averse from all spiritual good*, and that this aversion or lack of moral disposition *in no degree impairs his responsibility for personal sinfulness.* The value of such modifications in descriptive phraseology will be readily apprehended: the changes proposed doubtless express what is at present the general if not universal view of the doctrine thus defined.

The essential fact which the Confession and the Catechisms are alike anxious to impress upon human conviction, is the fact that this depravity, total and utter and universal, this indisposition and aversion to all spiritual good, this inclination and proneness to evil, is something from which, left to himself, man will never gain deliverance. This interior root and spring in the moral nature, *from which do proceed all actual transgressions*, is in other words ineradicable through any energies resident in the soul apart from grace. It demands the intervention of some higher power, some divine energy, in order to the thorough correction of the evil, and to the implanting of a spiritual good which accompanies or indicates salvation. On this vital point the evangelical creeds of the

Reformation were substantially agreed. Socinianism might affirm, as it did, the inherent capability of man to restore and even save himself. The Roman communion might insist, as it did, on the presence in man of moral capabilities which, if not coördinate with the divine Spirit, might still aid in preparing the soul for salvation, and even in bringing about that salvation. Arminianism might hesitate, as it did, to accept so positive and sweeping a doctrine of sinfulness, and prefer to describe the fact in more mediate, less uncompromising terms. Here and there a theologian like Zwingli or Melancthon might be inclined to synergistic views of that great process of spiritual restoration, for which the Gospel is sent to men. But the Confessions, from that of Augsburg down to that of Westminster, were agreed in the essential truth which the language just considered was intended to convey. It is indeed a fair criticism that some at least of the terminology employed in them defeats its own end by its extreme intensity, especially as we find it in the Reformed symbolism. But respecting the essential fact all were agreed in declaring this original sin or sinfulness to be a cardinal tenet in the Gospel scheme; and in affirming the spiritual impossibility of deliverance and restoration from such sin except through the gracious ministries of the Spirit of God.

13. Objections urged: Creed statement justified: Case of infants and of the heathen.

The objections which have been urged against this doctrine in later times have been in part anticipated in the Symbols. It is, for example, alleged that this conception of the corrupted estate of man is at variance with observed facts, since we often see in unrenewed men honesty and charity, and a willing loyalty to the claims of righteousness, in the various relations of life. But even the Confession of Augsburg guarded against this objection by admitting on one side (XVIII) that man by nature hath some liberty to work a civil righteousness, and to choose such things as reason can reach unto, while on the other side it denied that man has power to work out a spiritual righteousness, without the aid of the divine Spirit. So the Thirty-Nine Articles declare (X), that the condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God. The Westminster divines also were careful to guard their very strong affirmation respecting the universal depravation of mankind by the statement (XVI: vii) that unregenerate men *may do things which God commands*, and which may be *of use to themselves and others;* yet declaring that, inasmuch as these things are not done in a right manner and

for the right end, the glory of God, they cannot be in a spiritual sense pleasing to God, or make the doer *meet to receive grace from God.* In the proposed Revision an improved statement was suggested to the effect that, inasmuch as these good works do not proceed from a heart purified by faith, they do not meet the full requirements of the divine law, and therefore cannot be pleaded as a ground of acceptance with God. Amiable qualities, commendable purposes and acts, elements of character which are attractive in the eyes of men, may thus exist in the same person in whom such spiritual corruption remains as will render him not only undeserving of salvation, but deserving rather of the divine condemnation. The Declaratory Act of the Free Church of Scotland teaches that, although the natural man is unable without the aid of the Holy Spirit to return to God, he is yet capable of affections and actions which in themselves are virtuous and praiseworthy.

The case of *infants dying in infancy* has often been urged as an objection, on the ground that depravity in the sense here defined is not properly affirmable of this class, which comprises so large a portion of the human race. The history of opinion in regard to the salvability of infants is one of very great interest. The Council of Trent, following the general trend of patristic and mediæval belief, held that all infants as members of the human race are under divine condemnation, and consequently, unless they receive the grace of baptism, in fact or at least by intention, are justly consigned to punishment in some appropriate, possibly merely negative form. The Augsburg Confession in like manner regarded baptism as essential to deliverance from such punishment, inasmuch as the taint of original sin is not otherwise except in extraordinary cases removable. Dorner (Hist. of Prot. Theol.) represents Luther as affirming this necessity, but also as saying with reference to the unbaptized children of Christians: The holy and merciful God will think kindly of them; what he will do with them he has not revealed. The Formula of Concord condemns as an Anabaptist heresy the opinion that the unbaptized offspring of believers should be accounted as belonging to the children of God, but does not positively affirm the opposite. Later Lutheranism has generally regarded the necessity of baptism in such cases as relative and ordinary rather than absolute, and has so far forth modified, though without abandoning, the earlier position. In respect to the infants of unbelievers and especially to infants born in paganism, dying in infancy, Lutheran symbolism is entirely silent: Krauth, Conservative Reformation. Among the Refor. d

theologians, Zwingli is conspicuous in affirming positively not only that all children of believers baptized or unbaptized, if dying in infancy, should be regarded as elect, but also that all who die in infancy outside of the pale of the church, and even in heathen lands, may through the superabounding mercy of God, be saved,—their death in infancy being taken as a sure sign of their election. But no continental Confession presents a distinct or positive doctrine as to the latter class. The Saxon Articles, the Helvetic Confessions and some others emphasize the obligation to baptize the offspring of believers, but say nothing respecting the fate of other infants. The Ten Articles of Henry VIII, affirm that children dying in infancy shall undoubtedly be saved by virtue of baptism, but otherwise not; while the Scotch Confession of 1580 rejects the cruel judgment of Rome against infants departing without the sacrament, but goes no further. One notable index of the prevalence of broader views during that century, at least in individual minds, appears in the striking declaration of the martyr Bishop Hooper: It is ill done to condemn the infants of Christians who die without baptism. He would likewise judge well, he said, of the infants of infidels who have no other sin in them but original. He held it not wrong, he added, for a Christian man to believe that the death and passion of Christ extended as far for the salvation of innocents as the sin of Adam made all his posterity liable to condemnation: See Warfield, Development of the Doctrine of Infant Salvation.

Such was the state of opinion at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In the controversy which soon arose between the Calvinists and the Arminians in Holland, we hear the latter party charging their opponents with holding, or with being obliged in logic to hold, the offensive tenet of the damnation of all infants, even the offspring of the elect, on the ground of constitutional depravity inherited by them as members of the race. Hence we find the Synod of Dort by way of response protesting vehemently, in the Conclusion to its Canons, against the unwarranted allegation that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from the breasts of their mothers—*ab uberibus matrum innoxies abripi* —and tyranically plunged into Gehenna, neither baptism nor the prayers of the church at all profiting them. Following shortly after this comes the more positive statement of the Westminster Confession (X:iii) which directly affirms that elect infants (elect of infants: Minutes, 162) or the infants of believers, as was quite certainly meant, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. This was unquestionably a notable advance on the

statement of Dort and on all antecedent symbolism,- indicating in fact the highest point which the Protestantism of the seventeenth century reached, in respect to the problem of the salvability of children dying in infancy, while yet under the shadow and taint of the universal pravity. The clause admits the depravation, but sets over against it the redemptive grace of Christ and the regenerative efficiency of the Spirit, as a sufficient ground of faith and hope respecting the salvation of all infants who are elect. To meet an obvious objection as to the efficiency of the Spirit in cases where personal or conscious faith could not be exercised, the Confession taught the broad and grand truth that the Spirit *worketh when and where and how he pleaseth*, even in the unconscious babe. Their doctrine of infant baptism (Conf. XXVIII: iv; L. C. 166, 177; S. C. 95: also, Direct. for Worship, Ch. VIII) is clearly based on this biblical ground,—infants being thus baptized, not because they are sinless in nature, but because divine grace is able to remove such sinfulness, even from the infantile soul, and therefore to save even the unconscious offspring of believers.

Large advances have been made, especially in this century, upon the Westminster teaching at this point. All infants, whether living to become adult or dying in infancy, are indeed to be regarded—to quote the language of the Auburn Declaration—as a part of the human family, and their sufferings and death, when they occur, are to be accounted for on the ground of their being involved in the general moral ruin of the race, induced by the apostacy of our first parents. But on the other hand, the broad proposition is now generally if not universally admitted, that all infants dying in infancy, whether children of believers or the offspring of unregenerate parentage, whether in Christian or in pagan lands, and whether after the advent of Christ or before, are to be regarded as included in the election of grace, and therefore as regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit. This is the positive proposition of the proposed Revision, and it may be accepted as representing the present doctrine of evangelical Protestantism generally. The Declaratory Act of the Free Church of Scotland, with some caution, affirms that, while the Gospel is the ordinary means of salvation for those to whom it is made known, yet it does not follow, nor is the Confession to be held as teaching, that any who die in infancy are lost. If it be offered as a criticism upon the divines of Westminster that they did not attain to such a positive and catholic view, it should also be said to their praise that the largest confessional statement ever made on this interesting

subject came from them: The symbolism of the Reformation will be searched in vain for any counterpart.

The question whether their associated phrase, *other elect persons*, referred simply to the imbecile or insane, or other persons in gospel lands who are incapable intellectually of being *outwardly called* by the ministry of the Word, or included also the heathen world outside the geographic range of Christianity, must be answered frankly in favor of the former and narrower, though an eminent American divine, (Shedd) has maintained the legitimacy of the wider interpretation. In one view it seems surprising that the earlier Protestantism should have done so little, and even thought so little, in regard to the pagan peoples in other continents. The Confessions, both Lutheran and Reformed, say almost nothing respecting the spiritual state or fate of the heathen races. The fact is explained in part by the extensive lack of information as to the religious condition of the unnumbered millions of heathendom, but chiefly by the absorbing demands made upon the Protestant churches in the maintenance and propagation of their doctrine and polity, in the presence of an overshadowing papacy on one side, and of developing heresy and unbelief on the other. Their eyes rested easily on the imbecile, the insane, the mentally incompetent dwelling among them: the heathen world was too remote and too obscure to attract largely their thought. It is the glory of later Protestantism, and especially of the evangelical churches of this century, that they have come to realize the depraved and the lost condition of that vast world, and have in some measure obeyed the summons of the Master to preach his Gospel to every creature in whatever land or island of earth. Some interesting evidences of the rise of a broader missionary feeling in some sections of primitive Protestantism, and especially in Britain, will be mentioned hereafter.

That the heathen as truly as the men and women of Christian lands, are to be regarded as by nature sinful, corrupt, and under divine condemnation, was unquestionably the general belief of the Westminster divines. At least no trace appears in the Symbols of the opinion now prevalent in some quarters that, inasmuch as the heathen know not the Gospel, and therefore have not consciously rejected Christ, they are to be accounted innocent before God. The Confession (I:i.X:iv) teaches that the light of nature and the works of providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to *leave men inexcusable;* and further that men are not to be saved in any other way than through Christ, *be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of*

nature. This language was undoubtedly intended to apply primarily to the adherents of what in the next century became the formulated and assuming deism of England, with its claim of salvation attainable through personal righteousness, and its contemptuous rejection of salvation through personal faith in a personal and divine Christ. But, in common with Protestantism generally, the Assembly were ready to apply the principle in the broadest form, even as inclusive of the whole race descended from Adam. They indeed recognized the just distinction (L. C. 151: 89) that sin is aggravated by the enjoyment of light and privilege, and that at the final judgment the heathen are to be condemned only on clear evidence and *full conviction of their own consciences*. This does not imply, as Dorner seems to infer, two separate standards of character in that final adjudication: the difference in such moral testing is in degree rather than in kind.

Of the possible salvability of some among the heathen, we find an occasional expression of hope among the Reformers, as in the case of Zwingli who, while affirming in his Theses (3) that Christ is the only way—*unica via*—for the salvation of all who have been, are, or may be, still expresses the hope that men like Socrates, dwelling outside of the Gospel, yet living up to the light they have, may be saved through the Christ whom they have never personally known. But no creed of Protestantism incorporates such a hope, nor has more recent Protestantism taken any other ground than that the heathen world, without Christ and his redemption, is in some deep and dreadful sense lost. The recent Revision goes so far as to affirm that all elect persons who are not outwardly called by the Word may still be saved, even though they dwell in pagan lands,—and the hope that there may possibly be many such is not directly forbidden by the Symbols as they stand. The Declaratory Act of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland affirms that, while the duty of sending the Gospel to the heathen who are sunk in ignorance, sin and misery, is imperative, and while the outward and ordinary means of salvation for those capable of being called by the Word are the ordinances of the Gospel, yet in accepting the Standards it is not required to be held that God may not extend his grace to any who are without the pale of ordinary means, as it may seem good in his sight. A similar statement appears in the Declaratory Act of the Free Church, 1892. Still evangelical Christendom can be said to hold no other doctrine than that the heathen universally need the Gospel in order to their enlightenment and salvation; and that it is therefore the imperative duty of the Church of Christ to proclaim that Gospel, age on age, until

the whole earth shall have the opportunity to know and believe in him, as the one and only Savior of mankind.

14. Sin, its nature: its guiltiness.

From this view of depravity, or sin in the nature, consequent upon the original transgression and infecting the race universally, we may now turn to contemplate sin as a fact in all its baleful manifestations in human life. No better definition of sin has ever been given than that found in the Shorter Catechism: *any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.* Some of the creeds of the Reformation, as the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord, fail to make the distinction here so clearly indicated between original sin and that sin which is personal, conscious, voluntary. The intense description of sin found in the Second Helvetic Conf. (VIII) while it recognizes this distinction, still fails to set forth in practical and comprehensive form this personal sin, with which after all we have most to do individually. The chapter in the Confession (VI) admits the distinction in the phrase, *both original and actual*, and teaches that both the original sin, and *all the motions thereof*, are truly and properly sin; and also affirms that all actual sin, being a transgression of the righteous law of God and contrary thereto, involves the sinner in guilt and condemnation in the deepest sense possible. The Larger Catechism, (24) adds to the definition in the S. C. the explanatory phrase, *given as a rule to the reasonable creature.* But that definition, simple, terse, solemn and convincing, stands by its own light as the best description of sin ever incorporated in any creed.

Of the two elements, the *transgression* is the first to attract our attention. It includes all infraction of the divine law, in whatever form that law may present itself as a rule of life to the reasonable creature. Nor is such infraction to be limited to overt action, as Roman Catholicism has been inclined to limit it: it is said (XV: iv) to be the duty of every man to repent of *his particular sins, particularly;* and in the Direct. for Worship (V), the minister is instructed in his public prayer to confess sins in thought, in word and in deed, sins secret and presumptuous, sins habitual and accidental—in a word, all those *motions of sin* that appear in our members or our lives, whether open or secret, and even that *concupiscentia* which is the immediate germ or fount of actual transgression. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches in similar terms (10) that God is terribly displeased with both our inborn and our actual sins, and will punish them in just judgment in time

and in eternity, unless we repent of them and find forgiveness in Him who is described in its opening sentence as our only comfort in life and in death. The Westminster phrase, *any transgression*, involves all and every form of transgression, in deed or word or thought, whether the law transgressed be the law of outward nature, the law of conscience, the moral code of the older Scriptures, or the supreme law as given and illustrated in Jesus Christ.

The phrase, *want of conformity*, introduces a still more solemn and inclusive conception. It points to the failure of man to come up in act and in feeling to that divine law to which the human soul is ever and inevitably subject. For that law is not a prohibition simply; it is also a demand, precept, injunction. It may be disobeyed by neglect as truly as by direct transgression. And all neglect of it is as truly voluntary, and therefore as truly a matter of accountability as any overt action. Moreover, such sinful neglects are far more frequent than sinful acts are; they constitute in fact a condition or state of the soul, and are as continuous as they are voluntary. It is especially noticeable that, while the Old Testament emphasizes and condemns wrong action, all transgression in deed, the New Testament, (and eminently our Lord) dwells rather on this state of the soul, which expresses itself in such continuous and willing negligence of divine claims, and pronounces this the greater, deeper, more damnable form of sin. Such want of conformity is therefore rightly placed before all overt transgressions, in the terse definition here given. And in the remarkable list of things forbidden in the exposition of the Ten Commandments (L. C. 104–148) we have an impressive witness to the intensity of the conviction of the Westminster divines on this vital point in the doctrine of sin. No earlier creed recognizes this element of sin so fully, though nearly all of them refer to the inward sinfulness, the state of willful negation as to spiritual things, as one of the primal grounds of the divine condemnation.

A third element in the Westminster doctrine appears in its recognition of sin, whether overt or negative, as committed not merely against the law of God, but against God himself as standing behind his law, and by his presence emphasizing it as the utterance of his supreme, sovereign, majestic, holy will. It is the law *of God*, that law which he has *given as a rule of life* to the reasonable creature, which is thus neglected or trampled under foot. Sin is therefore disobedience—the disobedience of the creature; his revolt of will and spirit from the Creator, the Father in providence, the moral Governor. All sin is therefore rebellion, if not

open, still actual,—if not expressed in action, still cherished as the fixed disposition of the soul,—rebellion against God and his moral administration, involving, were such a thing possible, the overthrow of his august sovereignty, and the prostration of his government as a vanquished dominion before the moral universe. It was natural that the authors of the Confession, even more than those who had gone before them in the Reformation, should bring in at this point their exalted estimate of the divine supremacy, and should stamp all sin with this blackest seal,—that in essence it is always and evermore a crime against God personally, and treason against his holy government. Calvin, more than any other Reformer, had emphasized this aspect of sin, as many passages in his Institutes plainly indicate. But even he did not present the doctrine in such solemn and awful aspect as we find it (VI:vi) stated in the Symbols: Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereto, doth *in its own nature* bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is *bound over to the wrath of God*, and the curse of the law.

Nor do the Symbols fail to recognize that inward principle of selfhood, that deep disposition and purpose of the sinner to gratify himself and have his own way, even against all divine law, which is the key to all such disobedience,—the dreadful spring and fount of all such rebellion against God and his holy government. In the Sum of Saving Knowledge it is quaintly said that, until God make us deny *ourselves*, we never look to God in anything, but *fleshly self-interest* alone doth rule us, and *move all the wheels of our actions*. Many kindred expressions may be found in the Confession and Catechisms. While on one side we are taught (II:ii) that to God is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service or obedience he is pleased to require of them, we are taught on the other, that the only reason why men do not recognize this supreme claim lies in that selfish hardness of heart, that love of self and of selfish pleasure, which becomes (XIII: i) a *dominion of the whole body of sin*, —a counter dominion, established in the very centers of the soul, which flaunts its godless banner in the air, and bids defiance to every claim of Deity. Such selfhood dominating in the breast, by its very nature impels the sinner to ignore all divine claims, to transgress at will any divine command, to reject every appointed standard of duty, and to cast God himself, so far as this is possible, out of the thoughts and out of the life. Milton has justly ascribed the fall of the tempter to the indulgence of this unholy disposition, and inspired Scripture recognizes it as the

inward and essential root of all actual sin, whether in the form of transgression, or in that inward want of conformity which is the antecedent of all transgression. Here human sin culminates: no broader, deeper, darker view is possible.

15. Strength of this conception: other views of sin, their deficiency.

The strength of this confessional description of sin in its four essential aspects, will be at once recognized. While the Westminster divines, following the general trend of the Protestant symbols, dwelt very much, perhaps relatively too much, on the more recondite doctrine of original sin as transmitted in the race, and of pravity or sinfulness as imbedded in the nature, they—as we have seen—by no means ignored or minified that sin, personal and voluntary, of which every man is conscious, and which in every man is the immediate and the main ground of condemnation. *For their sin*, is the expression used again and again to indicate the essential basis of the divine wrath and curse upon sinners. They well realized that clear, solemn, convincing views of personal sin were absolutely prerequisite to that doctrine of redemption from both the curse and the power of sin through Christ as Mediator, which they made central and supreme in their confessional system. Nor have the study and experience of two centuries shown that they were in any degree too intense, too sweeping, too solemn in their descriptions of such personal sinfulness. Practical experiment under widely varying conditions, and long continued, has proved the essential truthfulness of their teaching. So far as evangelical belief has adhered to what they taught—so far as the Protestant pulpit has repeated and emphasized their profound and thoroughly biblical instructions, just so far has the correlative doctrine of gracious redemption won its appropriate victories, and gathered its peculiar fruitage in the hearts and lives of men. And on the other hand, so far as there has been any deviation from this strong and impressive conception of sin—so far as men have attempted to weaken these descriptions and to substitute less scriptural notions, just so far has the power of the pulpit been impaired, and the glory of the Gospel as a saving scheme been dimmed.

More recent times have developed many antagonistic theories of sin as seen in the individual man. It has been said that sin is only an error, originating in ignorance or in forgetfulness,—men not so much intending to do wrong as falling into wrong, because they do not at the moment clearly discern the right. It has been said that sin is merely such stumbling as naturally occurs to a finite and limited being like man,—he being but an infant taking

here and there a misstep in the effort to act morally—a misstep which only prepares him for firmer virtue in the end. It has been said that sin is only the result of that divine arrangement in human development by which the sensibilities and desires begin to act before the judgment is sufficiently matured to control them,—the will yielding to their impulsion because it has not yet come into the experience of anything higher. It has been said that sin grows out of the organic relation subsisting between mind and matter, or out of the peculiar constitution of man as composed of body and spirit; ever depositing itself upon the soul, to use an old Gnostic metaphor, as rust does on iron; something springing spontaneously and inevitably from the eternal antithesis between soul and body, mind and matter. It has been said that sin results from the correlation divinely established between moral good and moral evil,—men learning what moral good is only through the experiment of moral evil, and becoming matured in virtue only through the negations and the disciplines of transgression. To all such theories one simple, vital, irrefragable objection may be urged,—that one and all they ignore the fundamental fact that men universally feel themselves in conscience accountable for their personal sin, and are perpetually sensible of guilt corresponding to such sin. Nor can it be claimed that this witness of conscience is a matter of education or tradition simply: such conviction of sin is almost as innate in man as consciousness itself. It is also a fundamental objection that, while ignoring or under-estimating this vital matter of personal accountability for personal sin before God, these theories in fact endeavor to put off the blame of such sin upon the constitution of man, or upon some peculiarity in his condition or development in life, or upon the constitution of nature, or even upon the purpose and arrangement of the Deity.

While such explanations or apologies are to be set aside on these fundamental grounds, it is equally incumbent on those who adhere to the Symbols to guard themselves sedulously against any defective conceptions of sin which may be at any time current within the circle of evangelical faith. The early Arminian party did not dare, as their Remonstrance clearly shows, (Art. III) to impair or lessen in any way the prevailing Protestant doctrine as to the reality and dreadfulness of sin, and the full responsibility and guiltiness of the sinner. To have demurred at this point would have been fatal to their entire attempt to modify or meliorate that firm though severe Calvinism to whose influence and tendency they were so strongly opposed. But it is true that in later times some of their disciples, in their strenuous revulsion

from the intense language if not the intense dogmatism of some Calvinistic theologies, have been led into serious deficiency in both thought and utterance on this vital point. There is little danger that such revulsion will lead really evangelical minds to open apologies for sin, or to regard sin as rather a negation than a positive and universal fact, or even to emphasize unduly the benefits of which, in an economy of grace, human sin may become the occasion, whether to the sinner or to others. Yet it is always dangerous even to become in the least indifferent or insensible to the sinfulness of sin, or to ignore in any way that need of solemn and humbling conviction of sin, without which true repentance and true faith are not likely to find place in the soul. To protect the church of Christ against such tendencies, and hold that church up to the highest and most practical standards at this point, is one of the noblest offices of the Westminster formularies. Subtracting all that may justly be charged as to intensity of language or dogmatism in opinion, or to undue assumption of authoritativeness, apparent in the discussions and deliverances of the Assembly, we may on fair comparision place their teaching on this subject at the head of the list as excelling in clearness, in fullness, and in practical effectiveness. The Reformers from Luther and Calvin down to the Synod of Dort were indeed by no means indifferent to the fundamental doctrine of sin in its personal and practical aspects. The careful student of the creeds will come upon many a striking statement, many a forceful proposition, many an elaborate exposition of biblical truth, which will convince him not only of the positive Augustinianism or rather Paulinism of the Reformers generally, but also of their profound experience of the essential truthfulness and worth of their accepted doctrine. That the Assembly of Westminster did not fall below them in either knowledge or experience or depth of conviction, but the rather led all the rest in the exposition of that doctrine, will not be questioned by any one who in the light of comparative symbolism duly estimates their confessional teaching.

16. Free will in man: confessional statements: the doctrine defined; conflicting theories.

It has been urged in more recent times that this strong doctrine of sin, coupled with the equally strong doctrine of pravity and of original or transmitted sinfulness, is in fact either positively subversive of the antithetic doctrine of free will in man, or at least tends to the neutralizing of that doctrine as a cardinal element in the proclamation of the Gospel. There

is little doubt that many of the Reformers were conscious of the antinomy thus suggested. Men like Melancthon realized the serious dilemma into which men of the type of Luther were bringing both themselves and the Protestant cause at this point, and did what they could to forestall the mischievous antagonism. Logicians like Calvin appreciated the difficulty, and endeavored earnestly to relieve it, though with but indifferent success. It is especially suggestive of the universal interest in the problem, that either an entire chapter or a separate article or distinct section on this subject is found in the Augsburg Conf. and Formula of Concord, in the First and Second Helvetic, in both the Belgic and French Confessions, and also in the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Canons of Dort. That the general teaching of these symbols emphasized strongly the actual deadness of will in the sinner, and in this way tended to impair the doctrine of responsibility for sin, will hardly be questioned. It is to the prevalence of such emphatic and in some instances dogmatic teachings, that we are to trace the rise of the Synergistic controversy in Germany and corresponding developments elsewhere, culminating in the Arminianism of Holland and its resultants in the British Isles. Some of the creeds were more moderate in statement than others, and in some we seem to detect indications of a policy to which later theology has in some cases been constrained,—the policy of stating the two antithetic truths, meanwhile leaving as insoluble the problem of their combination. An eminent historian (Schaff) has claimed that the Westminster Confession itself expressly teaches freedom of will as well as foreordination, but leaves the solution of the apparent antinomy to scientific theology.

The Chapter on Free Will (IX) in the Confession is a remarkably skillful statement. It consists of five sections, of which the first is a generic description or definition of the will as one of the constituent faculties of the soul, while the other four describe this faculty in action, in the four moral spheres of innocency, of sin, of grace and of glory. This analysis of the four spheres or states wherein the will may act, was taken directly from the Formula of Concord, and is one of very great value in the proper explication of the doctrine. What man was capable of doing before the fall, what he can or cannot do since the corruption of the fall, what he may be enabled to do when converted and translated into a state of grace, and what he will do when made immutably free to good alone in the estate of glory, are successively described with signal care. The several sections of the chapter should be contemplated in their vital relations to each other, and the entire chapter

ought never to be interpreted by itself, but should rather be studied in conjunction with all the other suggestions on the subject which appear here and there throughout the Symbols. It was obviously the general plan of the Assembly, wherever differences of view existed or where such antitheses in doctrine occurred, to provide place somewhere in the Symbols for the expression of such differences, or for the recognition of truths which, though well grounded in themselves, seemed to their apprehension to be mutually conflicting. Thus in interpreting this chapter, we should take carefully into account all that had been previously said in the Confession respecting the liberty of will bestowed on our first parents, the character of God as precluding the possibility of his being the author or approver of sin, and the criminality of man in the fall, and in all his acts as a fallen and corrupted being. We should also note with care what is taught in subsequent chapters, and especially in that (XIX) on the Moral Law, and also the many expressions in the two Catechisms, which affirm on one side the deadness of the sinful will, but maintain on the other the guilt of all transgression and all want of conformity to the divine law, resulting from the depraved yet voluntary disposition and purpose.

The first section in this remarkable chapter affirms that the will of man is endowed of God with *natural liberty*, and that this liberty is of such a character as to preclude the thought that man is under natural necessity—under any species of outward force, by which his will is *determined to good or evil.* We are reminded at once of the statement in chapter IV, respecting our first parents as having the law of God written in their hearts and *power to fulfill it;* and by antithesis, of the statement in chapter VI, that their descendants are *utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good*, and wholly inclined to all evil. In the third section in this chapter we find the startling affirmation that man, being in this state of sin, has *wholly lost all ability of will*—an affirmation which would be wholly incongruous with that of the first or opening section, if the loss affirmed were not limited by the vital phrase, *to any spiritual good accompanying salvation.* This phrase clearly shows that the Westminster divines did not intend to contravene in the third section what they had affirmed as to natural liberty, or the power to will and to do, in the first section; but were simply endeavoring to teach what all evangelical minds agree in believing, that no sinner ever will, ever can, restore himself by mere volition to a state of holiness in the sight and estimate of God. To meet the apparent antinomy involved in these sections, the

proposed Revision suggested an additional sentence in the first section: Wherefore man is and remains a free moral agent, retaining full responsibility for all his acts, in his states alike of innocency, of sin, of grace and of glory. And for the same reason it was proposed to substitute for the sweeping and somewhat misleading phrase *all ability of will*, the better phrase, all disposition,—a change which would locate the inability of the sinner where it mainly if not entirely belongs, within the moral nature. The four states mentioned in the first sentence are those described in the four following sections of the chapter: these constitute the only four states in which it is possible for man as a spiritual being to act.

Careful study of the Protestant symbols will reveal the fact that, notwithstanding varieties in forms of statement and in clearness and fullness of expression, they were substantially one in their general doctrine; and also the further fact that the divines of Westminster in the language just quoted fairly comprehended that doctrine and gave it exact and practical expression throughout. The Augsburg Confession quoted with approval the saying of Augustine, that there is in all men a free will which hath the power of reason, but added (XVIII), that this will hath no power to work out spiritual righteousness (or true holiness) without the Spirit of God; and condemned the Pelagian dogma that by the power of nature alone we are able to love God above all things. The Formula of Concord, compiled in full view of the Synergistic controversy, carried the doctrine of the inability of the sinful will to its full length, in antagonism to the affirmation of Melancthon respecting the consenting will of man as a concurrent cause of holy action. The French Confession, (IX) tersely said that, although man has a will that incites him to do this or that, yet this will is altogether so captive to sin that he has no other liberty (or ability) to do right that than which God gives him. The Belgic Confession goes still farther along the same line, admitting that some remains of the original will have survived the fall, but declaring that man has nothing of himself, and can do nothing of himself in the direction of holiness, unless it be given him of heaven. These references sufficiently indicate the concurrent teaching of Protestantism not only on the continent but in Britain prior to the Assembly. And the debates in that body, so far as preserved, show how carefully the antecedent symbolism had been studied, and how thoroughly it was accepted by most, if not by all of the members.

It is impracticable here to enter into any analytic investigation of the doctrine thus presented, with a view to its defense or

confirmation. The question whether the human will is truly free except as it is empowered and enfranchised by grace, is one which from the era of the Assembly until now has never ceased to interest alike the theologian and the philosopher. Theories ranging from complete determinism to the most absolute or unlimited liberty are still, and are likely to be, current among both classes. It is however admitted by all that the will even of an archangel is a finite rather than an infinite power, and that there are natural boundaries beyond which even the quickening force of grace will not enable the soul of man to pass. It is also admitted by most thoughtful minds that sin both hereditary and personal has infected not merely the intellect and the moral sensibilities, including the conscience, but also and in some respects especially the will—eminently when acting in the spiritual or religious sphere. The nature and extent of this moral limitation, the relative proportion of the hereditary and the personal elements in it, the agency of motives external and internal as affecting volition and determining character, the relation of natural inability to moral ability and to full accountability before God, are matters respecting which wide diversity prevails—a diversity which is not likely soon to pass away. But what the divines of Westminster incorporated in their astute and balanced statement, embodies fairly all that is essential now in a churchly confession: and when taken in conjunction with all that since their day has been said in the way of explanation, by those who adhere cordially to the essence and substance of their teaching, it well represents in our age as in theirs the best and safest conclusion to which either a thoughtful philosophy or a broad and calm theology has thus far attained.

17. Man under law: moral government: its nature and scope.

At this point it is desirable to recur to the contemplation of man as a creature living under law, as well as possessing a free and therefore accountable will, and to consider more distinctly the underlying conception of a moral government over man, as already suggested under the doctrine of Providence. The correlated conception of God as Moral Governor as well as fontal and creative Spirit, ruling by the necessities of his own infinite nature over his moral creatures, and in such rule exhibiting all the qualities and endowments of his perfect character, has likewise been introduced in the general analysis of God in his essential being. It has been intimated that the Westminster divines seem to have failed to recognize, at least in their confessional statements, that broad distinction which Bishop Butler a century later unfolded so well in his incomparable Analogy,

between the providential and the moral government of God. That such a distinction exists, and that in some directions it is a distinction of great practical importance, may be easily discerned. Though both forms of government are administered by the same divine Mind and are interblended at a thousand points, yet they obviously differ widely as to their subjects, to the types of law enforced and the form of authority displayed, to the ends sought, and the motives or forces employed in their administration. Providential government comprehends alike all the creatures of God and all varieties of physical control over such creatures, while moral government relates specifically to moral beings, and particularly—as here considered—to men as accountable creatures. The different types of law are illustrated, for example, in the law of gravitation as contrasted with the law of love,—the first type acting under physical necessity, and the other on the principle of freedom. In moral government the authority brought to bear is personal,—the Governor as a person dealing with persons, in a sway radically unlike that of nature. The ends sought in providential government are vital preservation and general control; in moral government the control is purely spiritual, and has its proper issue in character alone. The final outcome of the one is realized in time; that of the other only in eternity, as a state of holiness or unholiness, blessing or retribution. So the forces employed are as distinct as the energy that guides a planet through the sky is distinct from that spiritual power which draws a soul into loving unity with Deity. Moral government finds its best analogue in human governments, both parental and civil, where results in conduct are secured through apprehensible law, and by virtue of intelligent motives, such as right or wrong, reward or punishment. At each of these points, and in particular aspects which need not be mentioned here, the providential and the moral government of God are to be thus carefully distinguished from each other. The latter may be sufficiently defined for the present purpose, as the exercise of the divine authority over the human race upon principles and by methods consistent with the moral nature of man, with supreme reference to the present development of character, and to the ultimate distribution of awards and penalties in a future state: See Taylor, N. W. Moral Government of God; Harris, God, Creator and Lord of all.

The fact of such a distinctive moral government might be established by simple reference to the correlated fact of physical or providential government. It might be proved still more conclusively from the obvious nature of man as a moral being, from

his possession of moral qualities on one hand, fitting him to be thus governed, while on the other hand he is seen to be incapable of governing himself, and therefore to be in need of some superior moral agency to rule over him. The fact is also demonstrable, as Butler has well shown, from experience,—it being palpable to all right reason and conscience that there is a law above man, made for him, and actually dominating over his moral as truly as his natural life. And it is also a fact of vital significance that the providential government of God appears to be everywhere tributary to such moral administration; nature always working in the interest of morality, as in the inflictions wrought through natural processes in the form of retribution for sin, and the corresponding benediction which nature herself pronounces on the obedient and worthy soul. What Matthew Arnold vaguely defines as a power in the world, not ourselves, working for righteousness, is thus continually manifesting itself in human experience, as not merely a preternatural power, but a supreme and holy Person, swaying all things and all events in the interest of holiness. God in his providence seems always to be thus contemplating man as the final end of both his preservation and his physical control. He is educating man ethically while he sustains him as a being; he seeks supremely the development of character, alike in every bountiful harvest he bestows, and in every privation or sorrow of our life under his providential administration.

More will be said hereafter respecting the foundations of the moral government here described, and the principles regarded and applied in its administration. It is enough at this stage to note the fact that this government is no arbitrary rule, assumed on the basis of mere power though the power were omnipotent, but is grounded rather in the nature of both God and man as moral beings, and in the indisoluble relationship established between them in both creation and providence. How far the Westminster divines recognized the doctrine as now defined, is not clear from their confessional statements. Traces of such recognition appear here and there, especially in the Catechisms, and in the Directory for Worship. But as to the essential fact that God rules over man ethically as well as physically,—as to the law of God, standing out in human life as representative of his moral government and enforcing it, their teachings are all that is needful. When we come to the study of their exposition of that law, especially as explained in the Larger Catechism, we shall find abundant evidence that they held and affirmed this sovereign administration of God over men and angels, over all the moral universe, as a

transcendent fact, far beyond and above all his displays of dominating potency in the wide realm of nature. Without limitation or reserve they strenuously taught the essential truth that man, though in a sense free, is still under moral law, and is bound to personal and perpetual obedience to such law, under all conditions and beyond all escape.

18. Duty of obedience, personal and perpetual: responsibility defined.

Whether this fundamental truth is best apprehended under the image of a covenant of works, or a covenant of life, as described in Chapter VII, or in the simpler way and form just stated, the essential truth in the case is never to be ignored. When it is said in that chapter that God was pleased to express his will and his authority *by way of covenant*, and when the first covenant is defined as a divine arrangement wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity *upon condition of perfect and personal obedience*, we have in the phraseology simply a somewhat unique statement of the universal fact that man is a creature divinely placed under law, not by his own consent or contract, but because God as his Creator and Sovereign is pleased so to place him; and of the further fact that obedience, personal, perfect and perpetual, is his immediate, his unquestionable duty. He has no choice as to whether such law shall be enacted, or what shall be its requisitions, or in what way it shall be enforced, or what rewards or penalties shall follow obedience or its opposite. At all these points God is supreme and alone; man can have no option or alternative; his liberty and his life are centered in the single word, Obedience.

It is well to note here, though in a preliminary way, the characteristics of that law to which man is thus subject, and the grounds of its majestic supremacy over him. It has its deep foundation, not in the individual conviction or conscience, neither in the coincidences of human conscience or the agreements of human society, nor in those fixed moral relationships by which the race is held together in unity. Nor is its ultimate basis to be found in the nature of right and wrong, viewed as rational principles or intuitions, but rather in the will of God;—not in that will contemplated as an imperial dictum, as Calvin seems to suggest, God making right by simply declaring it such, but rather in that will viewed as the Logos or expression of the complete and holy nature of the Deity. As such it becomes the absolute rule of righteousness, to which—it is not improper to say—God himself yields perfect and perpetual obedience. The appeal of this holy law therefore is not to the fears or superstitions of man, but to their

reason and their conscience,—becoming thus, in the phrase of the Confession, a law written on their hearts. Its authority lies partly in what it is thus seen by reason and felt by the conscience to be, but ultimately in Him who enacted it,—the Lawgiver standing always behind the law for its proper enforcement. Its rewards and penalties are found, partly in what nature may bring upon obedience or its opposite, but are chiefly such as involve character whether holy or unholy, and such as God in infinite wisdom chooses to bring on the obedient soul or on the transgressor. Its administration is supremely and eternally equitable; each subject being judged by it according to his ability,—no harsh or cruel exaction ever made,—no sin ever escaping penalty, and no obedience ever failing of reward. In the exalted phrase of Scripture, the law of the Lord is perfect, his testimonies are sure, his statutes right, his commandments pure, his administration clean and enduring, and his judgments true and righteous altogether.

The supremacy of that law over man is by the nature of the case absolute: its right to rule over him is both legitimate and irresistible. Man cannot alter it; he cannot question it; he cannot evade it. He can no more throw off its imperatives than he can dethrone its Maker. It is as far above him as God is, and its sway is as imperial as that which controls the stars. Both by its own nature and by the will of him who enacted it, it is ever dominant and regal over mankind. In respect to time, it must continue thus to rule from the first creation of finite moral existences onward to the remotest ages of eternity. In respect to space, it extends through every realm of moral being from the most central heavens outward to the farthest orb where thought, feeling, conscious personality are found. As to contents, it comprehends in its vast sweep every act, every choice or impulse, or even thought that springs up within the conscious soul of man. As to application, it fits every conceivable case that can arise within the myriad varieties and manifestations of human experience. In every aspect it is indeed perfect, whether men obey or resist it: it would shine out eternally with undiminished splendor, though the entire universe of moral beings should conspire for its overthrow.

It is in the contemplation of such a law and of a government thus administered, that we gain some just conception of the nature and scope of human responsibility before God. The term, responsibility, simply implies the intrinsic and inevitable obligation of every soul to render proper obedience—to yield complete, cordial, perpetual allegiance to this administration in whatever form it may present itself. It is, in other words, absolute amena-

bility to the divine law, and to him who has enacted it as, in the language of the Confession, *a rule of life for the reasonable creature.* Such responsibility implies the possession of power or ability to render obedience: it cannot apply to the animal, the child, the imbecile, who are incapable of recognizing the law as enforced. It implies the exercise of personal choice in view of the demands of that law; intelligence, conscience, personal volition, are always involved in it. Obligation, personal and free, is the universal correlative,—the binding of the soul by an indissoluble bond to the throne of the holy Lawgiver. The word, duty, is another term which signifies what, in the nature of things, is due from us or owed by us to him who is our Creator and our eternal Sovereign. Still another term is accountability—the answer of the soul to God, judicially required, for the manner in which it has regarded his law, and has lived and acted under its righteous authority. How fully the Westminster divines recognized all that is implied in such terms—how fully they emphasized the cardinal fact represented in them, will appear more in detail when we come to consider the second great division of the Symbols—that which treats, not of what we are to believe concerning God, but of *what duty God requires of man.*

19. Failure of man under law: miseries of disobedience: possible deliverance.

One further truth remains to complete our survey of the anthropology of the Symbols. It is that which describes in such solemn terms the failure of man to keep what is called the covenant of life, or the covenant of works, and the estate not merely of sin but of misery, into which by that failure humanity has fallen and is continuously falling. It is probably a defect in their presentation, that they dwell so much relatively on this misery as an entailed or hereditary infliction, and too little relatively on it as the immediate consequence of that individual probation, that personal choice and action under the divine law, which is the chief spring and source of all retributive miseries. It surely involves no denial or minifying of the awful fact of transmitted sinfulness and consequent retributive exposure, if we emphasize also, and even more earnestly, that personal responsibility under which each soul of man consciously exists, or lay stress on the miseries that flow in directly upon the soul as the result of its individual failure in duty and in obedience. It is the safe position of an eminent American teacher, (Smith, H. B. Theol.) that the sin common to the race first shows itself in the individual in the form of personal preference or consent; and that then, and not till then, are personal

liabilities and desert incurred. He rightly adds that it is not a true statement, that each individual of the race is personally deserving of eternal damnation, as is sometimes said, on account of the sinful act of Adam.

The Confession (VII) strongly teaches both that death in sin rests on all the posterity of Adam because they are sinful, and that all personal sin binds the transgressor as a criminal over to the wrath of God, and makes him subject to death, with all miseries temporal and eternal. The Shorter Catechism (19), declares in similar terms that all men as fallen are made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. The Larger Catechism (27), varies the statement by affirming further that the sinner has lost the favor of God and is under his displeasure,—that he is the child of wrath and a bond-slave to Satan,—and that he is justly liable to all punishments in this world and in that which is to come. It also proceeds (28), to describe with painful minuteness the punishments of sin in this world as both inward and outward; *inward*, as blindness of mind, a reprobate sense, strong delusions, hardness of heart, horror of conscience, and vile affections; *outward*, as the curse of God upon the creatures for our sake, and all other evils that befall us in our bodies, names, estates, relations and employments, as well as physical death itself. We have here a marked illustration, not of the inhuman severity or cold indifference to the miseries of their fellow men, sometimes charged as characterizing the divines of Westminster, but rather of their unswerving fidelity to truth and to fact, and to the spiritual and eternal welfare of mankind. There is nothing in their enumeration which is not essentially true in the case of every one who refuses to obey God and his government; and in setting forth to the view of all these earthly miseries of sin, they were only following the example of Him who faithfully warned men of the multiplied evils of sin in this life, while he also spoke with solemn emphasis of the outer darkness, of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is never quenched. It is guilty weakness rather than holy courage, which leads to the ignoring or concealment of the essential truth on such a matter, and which beguiles men into the destructive belief that sin is but a slight evil, an occasional fall, an incidental and superficial taint, which God is always ready to overlook and to forgive, even though the indulgence in it goes on without restraint.

Postponing all reference to the miseries of sin in the life to come, as these are faithfully set forth in the Symbols, we may close our survey of the natural man as they describe him, with the question

of questions whether deliverance from such moral miseries, and restoration to the favor and image of God, are possible to a being who has so far fallen from his high estate, and by his refusal to yield perfect and perpetual obedience, has become involved in such criminality before that Being to whom, by his moral constitution, endowments and position, he is made forever responsible. Contemplating man as we thus find him, we may still claim in answer, that there are gracious possibilities remaining in him and in his providential environment, which do justify the hope that he may yet be saved from his sin and its condemnation. He cannot indeed escape by his own act from either his moral corruption or his personal guiltiness. The verdict of the law has already been pronounced upon him; the solemn decision of the Judge is already uttered. Nor has the sinner any such compensatory or restorative power in himself, as justifies the expectation that by his own energies he may yet come back to duty and to God. But on the other hand, man is not a devil, and behind the sinning man there stands a better man, ever summoning the recreant soul to obedience. The moral nature though corrupted is still capable of being regenerated and restored, by divine though not by human power. And the very discords within the soul, as well as its better aspirations, the longing of the sinning race for deliverance, its sacrifices and its prayers and worship, all point to such a possibility. The providence of God toward the sinner, in its tender constraints and its faithful warnings, also seems to warrant the expectation that the God of providence will not leave the transgressor to perish forever. In like manner, his moral administration strangely mingles delay with penalty, limits the influence of the evil and stimulates toward the good, and in an thousand multiplied ways of mercy suggests the hope, the expectation, that sinful man may yet be saved. Such are the natural intimations in the case, all pointing toward such a happier issue; and the divine response to all such anticipations and longings, as Christian symbolism universally declares, is CHRIST.

LECTURE SIXTH—CHRIST THE MEDIATOR.

HIS INCARNATION: HIS PERSON, DIVINE AND HUMAN: HIS MISSION—MEDIATION: HIS MEDIATORIAL OFFICES—PROPHET, PRIEST, KING: HIS HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION.

C. F. CH. VIII. CH. II, iii. L. C. 36–56, 85–90. S. C. 21–28.

Protestantism was in essence a movement for the restoration of Christ and his Mediation to that supreme place from which Romanism by its excessive exaltation of the Church with her sacraments and priesthood, had in effect removed them. The Roman theology, while recognizing in form the work and passion of the Son of God as the ultimate ground of salvation, had thrust the Church forward, just as in later times it has thrust forward the immaculate Mary, between Christ and the believer,—representing the ministries of the Church as mediatorial, and making salvation turn primarily on what the Church could do for and upon the soul. The intrinsic grace of her sacraments, her official intercessions, her absolution and benediction, were declared to be indispensable: men could attain and enjoy eternal life only through her. Protestantism at a stroke reversed all this by its strong and just doctrine that salvation turns immediately upon the relationship directly established between the believer and Christ, the one and only Redeemer, through personal faith alone, and without any intervening churchly mediation. As Romanism required that the soul should come to Christ through the Church, Protestantism held that the soul could come into the Church only through Christ; and that her sacraments, her intercessions, her grace and benediction, were to be granted only to those who had already consciously embraced the Savior himself, and had entered already on the Christian life through personal union with him. Christ was in this way brought directly into the foreground of vision and of faith; his mediation became at once the primal and the essential thing; and the mediating ministries of the Church had efficacy only when that supreme mediation had first wrought out its blessed result in the justifying of the sinner before God. Everything was centered finally in Christ. Behind the finished and the glorious

work of grace stood the divine and transcendent Person; and in him the Reformers found alike the strong foundation of their personal faith, and their peculiar endowment for the grand work to which by his Word and Spirit they had been called.

It was therefore natural that the creeds of the Reformation should contain such extensive and strong articles concerning Christ and concerning his Mediation. These two great truths are generally set forth, not as separate, but in their sacred correlation. While therefore we are searching for their doctrine concerning the Savior, we are all the while brought face to face with that doctrine of justification through personal faith in him, which has well been called the essential principle of the Reformation. So far as his person was concerned, the Reformers were inclined at first simply to affirm their loyalty to the three ancient creeds, and it was not until Socinianism had become conspicuous at Geneva and elsewhere, and was threatening to lead many among the Protestant adherents astray, that it was found needful to emphasize the true and full divinity of Christ, as a cardinal element in spiritual Christianity. In the Catechism of Luther, we find only an abbreviation of the doctrine of Nicæa, and in the Augsburg Confession (III) we have simply an expanded statement of the Chalcedonian doctrine, followed immediately by the article (IV) on justification, in which all hope of obtaining forgiveness and righteousness before God through personal powers, merits or works is renounced, and faith in the death and legal satisfaction of Christ is presented, in distinction from all confidence in church or priest, as the true key to acceptance with God. In the Formula of Concord (III) we find an elaborate article on the righteousness of faith before God, in which the true and full divinity of our Lord is described as the ground of our justification, in contrast with certain papal and other errors which are directly named and condemned. On this point, as on justification itself, Luther and his immediate successors in Germany, Melancthon included, were essentially one.

1. Christology of the Reformation: ancient doctrine affirmed.

The Calvinistic symbols, as might be anticipated from their later date, were still more full and decisive in their affirmations. Thus, the First Helvetic Conf. (XI) declares that Christ is our only mediator, intercessor, sacrifice and high priest, our Lord also and King, through whom by true and simple faith we receive reconciliation, redemption, sanctification, expiation, wisdom, protection and support,—a statement wholly unintelligible except on the basis of belief in his true and proper divinity. In the Second

Helvetic Conf. we find an elaborate chapter, (XI) De Jesu Christo, vero Deo et homine, unico mundi Salvatore: and on this unique and only Savior, far above the priesthood and the church, we are told to rest entirely for our salvation, all other hopes being spurned and thrown away. The French Conf. is especially remarkable for the fidelity and earnestness with which it describes the great Mediator, the eternal Son of God, through whom we have access to the Father, and from whom we hold or derive our life, as from our chief or Head. The Scotch Conf. (VI–VII) expresses in a way still more quaint and touching the necessity for acknowledging this one Mediator, the only Son of God, our Head, our Brother, our Pastor and the great Bishop of our souls. The Thirty-Nine Articles declare (VIII), that the three ancient creeds ought thoroughly to be received and believed, for that they may be proved by certain warrants of holy Scripture; and in three other articles (II–IV) that historic symbol sets forth the eternal being, the incarnation, the two-fold nature, the life, suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord in most explicit terms. So finally, do the Irish Articles teach not only what Christ has wrought as our Mediator, but also what he is as an eternal Person, of one and the same substance, power and eternity with the Father, and therefore truly and forever God.

In the Westminster Symbols taken in their entirety, we find a completer description of Christ in his being, his personality human and divine, his mission and offices and states whether of humiliation or of exaltation, than can be found in any of these preceding creeds. Here the Christology of Protestantism reaches its full and beautiful consummation. The Assembly had on one hand the advantage derived from the study of all antecedent symbolism. They were also stimulated by the presence of that Socinian or humanitarian error which, having its original center in Geneva, had spread through different countries on the Continent, and even infected the British Isles with its malevolent influence. They were also more familiar with those technical and philosophic modes of stating Christian doctrine, which had come into vogue during the last half of the sixteenth and the earlier part of the seventeenth century. Hence they present the Trinity in God (Ch. III) with even excessive elaboration; and when in chapter VIII, they describe the Mediator, they leave nothing unsaid that would help us to apprehend their doctrine of him whom they set forth as the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, the only begotten, the heir of all things, and judge of the world. It is doubtful whether any

chapter in the Confession, unless it be the first, *Of the Holy Scripture*, or the nineteenth, *Of the Law of God*, equals this in breadth and elaborateness and spiritual impression. The description of Christ in the two Catechisms (L. C. 36–42: S. C. 21–22) emphasizes what is taught so abundantly in the Confession: and even in the Form of Government and the Book of Discipline, the truth is constantly flashing out either in technical statement or in illustrative reference or allusion. The Sum of Saving knowledge contains much equally full and impressive teaching on this vital doctrine. What a marvel it is in the psychology of unbelief, that any who had once intelligently comprehended and avowed their faith in this series of symbolic testimonies, should ever have passed over and downward, as English Presbyterianism did so largely in the eighteenth century, into an unevangelic and profitless humanitarianism!

2. Eternal existence as the Son of God: the phrase, only begotten.

The first element in the confessional doctrine concerning Christ is his eternal existence and eternal sonship. The eternity of God as a being existing before all time or space, all matter, and all created existences or objects, has already been noted as a fundamental premise in Christian theology. The eternal existence of God as triune, a peculiar mode of being which is internal and everlasting as well as external,—exhibited especially in its relations to our salvation,—has also been noted, and on biblical grounds justified, so far as it is possible for the human mind to conceive of such a profound peculiarity. Both the helpfulness and the limitation and inadequacy of the term, Person, to describe such a threefold mode or form of existence, have also been sufficiently considered. It follows now from what has thus been presented, not merely that Christ existed in his divine personality before his incarnation, but also that there was no beginning to his existence,—that as the second Person in the Godhead his life before all time was as limitless in duration as that of the Father, and that all that can be affirmed or conceived respecting the eternity of God the Father, is also to be conceived and affirmed respecting him. Thus the Confession describes him as being *very and eternal God* and *equal with the Father*, and living in ineffable oneness with God the Father *from all eternity*. It also represents the Son as engaged together with the Father and with the Spirit in the primal work of creation, at the very beginning of time. And the Larger Catechism (36–37) teaches that *in the fullness of time the Son became man*, and so was qualified by such assumption of humanity to become our Savior. The Shorter Catechism (20–21) contains language equally explicit.

The terms, *begotten* and *only begotten*, employed in the Symbols, doubtless because of their use in a few instances in both the Old and the New Testaments, and because they were viewed as correlative to the more frequent and more intelligible phrase, Son of God, have been the subject of earnest discussion, and in some instances have given rise to positive error. When we are taught (II:iii) that the Father is *of none, neither begotten* nor proceeding, while the Son is *eternally begotten of the Father;* and again that it is *proper*, or peculiar, to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, and that this process is eternal in duration, we are in some danger, first, of inferring with some divines of the last century that the Son exists only by the will of the Father, and consequently that, should the Father so choose, the Son would instantly cease to be, and the trinity would no longer be a fact in the divine constitution. We are in danger of inferring, secondly, with ancient Arianism, that, since the Son exists by the will of the begetting Father, there must have been a time in the eternal past when this process began, and when the Son consequently began to be,—a conclusion which would warrant the inference that he was not truly and absolutely the Son of God, but rather, as Arius held, the first-born of every creature. It has also been inferred in other circles that these phrases imply, if not derivation, at least such a measure of subordination, that the Son can do only what the Father wills, and is in that sense and degree inferior—consequently divine, but not complete deity. It is obvious at a glance that all such interpretations are to be carefully excluded: begetting and begotten, whatever the terms signify, are not processes which justify these or any kindred conclusions. The language does not imply either a creation of the Son by the Father, or a beginning of existence in some past era of eternity, or any inferiority of nature or endowment, or any species of dependence that would be inconsistent with full and absolute deity. An illustration drawn as this is from the narrow realm of human experience, and one in its own nature so inconceivable, is always in danger of being pressed beyond its legitimate boundaries. It should indeed never be forgotten, that whatever is expressed concerning the triune God in the terms of humanity or of nature, either at this point or elsewhere, must fall immeasurably short of describing the sublime reality.

The confessional statement that the Son is the same in substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory and in every attribute of his being, contains all that we can know on this recondite theme. Accepting the statement as final, we may still

inquire whether the name given him indicates an immanent and eternal relationship, or only a relation assumed in time, and in the interest of redemption;—in other words, whether the second person in the blessed Trinity, existing from eternity, was always a *Son*, or became a Son only in and through his incarnation and his Messiahship. The Symbols follow the general trend of Scripture in speaking of Christ as eternally a Son, and the general argument for an internal and eternal Trinity seems to involve or include such eternal sonship. If the conception be not pushed too far in the direction just indicated, it is safer to rest in it than to expose our faith in the full deity of the Son to any errors that might spring from the dogma of a merely temporary sonship. Still, inasmuch as the procession of the Spirit from the Father, or from both Father and Son, is to our apprehension a procession in time, a procession planned indeed from all eternity but becoming a fact only in time and in conjunction with the great work of human salvation, we shall not be seriously astray if with all proper precaution we think of the sonship also as chiefly an event of time,—an event eternally contemplated, and thus eternally existent in the divine Mind, but becoming real and glorious in and through the historic incarnation.

The grand fact to be noted here is the existence of Christ as the Son of God before that incarnation—his pre-existence, not as a creature, but as divine from all eternity. It was proper for him to say that he existed before Abraham, and by implication before all the patriarchs, even Noah or Adam, not as a prophecy or a promise merely, but as a real person also. The beloved John justly declares that he was in the beginning with God and was God, and that all things were made by or through him as their instrumental cause. What proportion of the theophanies recorded in the Pentateuch and elsewhere were his antetypal revelations of himself, we are not able absolutely to determine. That some, if not many, were actual though transient utterances of the eternal Logos, given by way of preparation for the more durable incarnation that was to follow, we are led by distinct biblical evidence to believe. The messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, the shekinah and cherubim and other preternatural manifestations in connection with the Mosaic economy, disclose to us not merely a Savior that was to be, but a Savior who truly was before Abraham, before Noah, before Adam, and who even during the tragedy of the fall revealed himself as that seed of the woman who should in time bruise the head of the serpent. The prophetic order also, with its remarkable characteristics and career, may properly be regarded

as so many voices in the wilderness, certifying to the existence in its time of One who was from the days of Moses its appointed head and crown—an ever present Prophet during that preparatory dispensation. What we are taught in regard to the decrees of God as before all time, and to the special decree of salvation as determined before the foundation of the world, clearly imply that there was also an eternal Savior, existing not merely as a purpose, but as a fact as old as these decrees. On such grounds it may safely be affirmed that the incarnation of that Savior, although it was the chronologic beginning of his kenosis or humiliation, was only the more visible and permanent manifestation of a process which began its sacred evolution in eternity. Such is the clear teaching of Scripture and of Christian symbolism universally, respecting the Son as pre-incarnate: and on this impregnable rock all merely humanitarian views of him must be dashed into fragments.

3. The Incarnation: its necessity and nature.

Turning therefore to the incarnation, we are brought at once face to face with certain questions of inconceivable moment. The Symbols teach unequivocally (S. C. 21–2) that this eternal Son of God *became man*, and that he became man *by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul;* and also (L. C. 36) that this was done *in the fullness of time*, or in accordance with an everlasting purpose and provision. And the Confession (Ch. VIII : ii) expands the statement by saying that the Son *took upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof*, yet without sin. The fact thus stated is in some sense ineffable. There were doubtless interior reasons in the mind of the triune Deity, justifying and requiring such an incarnation, which we are in no degree competent to fathom or conceive: here as at so many other points, God is his own interpreter. That a sufficient and even imperative necessity really existed, though such necessity were altogether unknown to us, may be inferred from the fact of an incarnation historically realized. It has been held by some that such is the relation between the infinite and the finite, that the finite can attain practical cognizance of the infinite only as God may condescend to take on him the forms and appear under the limitations of the finite. On this theory it is supposed that there may be incarnations in other worlds, suited to the spiritual need of angels and archangels, or of other orders of moral intelligences differentiated in endowment and condition from man. By others it is suggested that the necessity for a divine incarnation lies specifically in what man is, as a being composed of soul and body, and thus capable of comprehending divine realities

only as these are cast into human form and aspect. But the Scriptures, so far as they explain the incarnation, find the explanation rather in what man is, not as man, but as a sinner,—the ultimate ground and need in the case lying specifically in human sinfulness and helplessness, and in the divine purpose of deliverance. Incarnation and salvation are on this view correlated terms—the first being an introductory and essential element in the great redemptive act expressed in the second: Smith, H. B., Syst. Theol.

Those who refuse to accept the doctrine of the true and proper divinity of Christ as the eternal Son of God, are constrained to affirm that no incarnation of Deity is necessary to the spiritual renovation or development of man,—in other words, that God is abundantly able through natural appliances and motives to secure this great end without himself assuming human form or becoming a man—to use the Nicene phrase—for us men and for our salvation. But a deeper and more accurate view of human nature as sinful, and of mankind as both corrupt and condemned before God, leads spontaneously to the opposite conclusion. Calvin suggests, (Inst. B II:12) that even if man had remained immaculately innocent, some incarnation might have been needful to bring him into full communication with God, but affirms that as sinful, man could not dare to approach God excepting through an incarnated mediator such as Christ. Whatever may be said as to any metaphysical or speculative necessity existing on the side of either God or man, there can be no adequate reason for challenging the moral or spiritual necessity in the case which grows out of what man is as a sinner, blinded, corrupt, helpless before God. At this practical point Christian symbolism, Roman and Greek as well as Protestant, is absolutely unified.

The Confession (Ch. VIII) simply declares that *it pleased God* that such an incarnate Mediator should be provided; and then points to the reason contained in the fact that no other than an incarnate Mediator, divine first and then human, could be adequate to accomplish the great end in view, namely human salvation. The Larger Catechism at this point as at many others is more explicit than the Confession, giving a series of reasons (38) why it was requisite that the Mediator should be God; then (39) further reasons why he should be man; and finally (40) still further reasons why he should be both God and man in one person. We can readily see how such an assumption of humanity was needful in order to bring God practically within the range of human thought, and especially to express divine grace in such forms

as man in his sin could apprehend and appreciate. It was only in this way that God could adequately set forth his abhorrence of sin, and at the same time his gracious desire to save the sinner; it was only in this way that the heart of man could be reached, and the race tenderly drawn back to duty and to God. In no other way could access to God and filial communion with him be assured, and in no other way could man learn so well what moral perfection is, and how it may be gained. The more we meditate upon it, the more necessary on many sides such an incarnate mediation appears, and the more sublime becomes the apostolic declaration that He who was with God and was God, became flesh and dwelt among us, that we might in him behold the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

There is a certain presumption in favor of the incarnation in the fact that conceptions of such a descent of deity into the sphere of humanity for beneficent purposes, have been held, often in grotesque and sensuous forms, throughout the pagan world. Such conceptions have revealed themselves so often in the great natural faiths, oriental and classic, and in the writings of the wisest and best representatives of heathenism, as to justify the inference that there is in human nature itself, not only a deeply seated sense of need, but a half conscious anticipation of some such bright possibility. But Christianity alone responds conclusively to this universal desire. The fact of such an incarnation is adequately certified only in the Bible. On the earthly side of it, the birth of Jesus Christ, as recorded by the four evangelists and as affirmed by the early Church, seems as capable of verification as the birth of any other person in ancient times. Even secular history, and the writings of those who opposed him and his Gospel, confirm our belief in the authenticity of the records concerning his actual entry on our earthly life. Neither is there just ground for questioning the truthfulness of the evangelic statements respecting the supernatural accompaniments of his birth, such as the star in the east and the songs of the angels, since to one who believes in a personal Deity, complete in every attribute and sovereign over the universe which he has made—in such a personal Deity, animated by a holy and gracious purpose to save our fallen race, and ready to manifest that purpose even by an incarnation of himself in human form and nature, these preternatural manifestations must seem not only possible in themselves, but concomitants to be expected and looked for, as sure witnesses to the great process to which they are summoned to certify. Such manifestations in the field of nature and of human experience are certainly

admissible in connection with such a transaction, if indeed they are not indispensable to its proper completeness. Like miracle and prophecy, they are true witnesses divinely chosen to testify to the world that an Immanuel has come to dwell among men.

4. Significance of the incarnation: the Kenosis.

The question whether God ever reveals or can reveal himself to mankind by processes above nature,—whether that doctrine of the supernatural on which Christianity is fundamentally based, has any rational warrant, reaches its culmination in the problem of the incarnated Son of God. If it could be shown that God cannot avail himself of such supernatural modes of communicating truth, or that any such communication if given cannot be historically verified, not only our faith in Christ as a person, but our confidence in the Christian system throughout, would be fatally impaired. If on the other hand, the fact of the incarnation can be not only shown to be possible, but established on reasonable grounds, then the doors of the supernatural are thrown open, and God is indeed with us in all the forms and measures needful to our complete restoration to himself. The truth of the incarnation, like the truth of the resurrection, becomes in this aspect the verifying sign and assurance of every other truth that is peculiar to Christianity as a supernatural faith. On the other hand, if the incarnation were an illusion, as unbelief in so many forms has alleged, Christianity with all it contains would be but a vision of the night.

It has already been stated that in the acceptance of this cardinal doctrine, the various branches of evangelical Protestantism not only agree together, but are in substantial harmony with both the Roman Catholic and the Greek communion. The earliest of the Christian creeds, with its affirmation concerning the Father, Maker of heaven and earth, and concerning Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, embodies the common confession of all believers, except the relatively small humanitarian bodies. The Canons of Trent and the Vatican Decrees presuppose throughout the eternal existence of him whom one of them describes as our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Redeemer of Mankind. So the Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Oriental Church, drafted and published while the Westminster Assembly was in session, speaks of Christ (Quest. 9) as Filium a Patre ante secula genitum, illique consubstantialem; and again (Quest. 38) repeats and explains the article in the Nicene Creed,—who for us men and for our salvation descended, became incarnate, and

was made a man. Luther and his followers were unvarying in their loyalty to this as a truth fundamental in the Christian religion; and Calvin, in the presence of the Genevan Socinianism, was even more emphatic in the same belief. The French Confession, prepared under his influence, may be taken as typical of all: We believe that Jesus Christ, being the wisdom of God and his eternal Son, has put on our flesh so as to be God and man in one person,—man like unto us, capable of suffering in body and soul, yet free from the taint of sin.

But while the fact of the incarnation was thus viewed as fundamental,—while the entire structure of Protestant theology whether Calvinistic or Lutheran was reared on this as an essential and impregnable foundation, it was natural that many speculative questions should arise in regard to this mysterious transaction. Thus, when we are taught in Scripture that our Lord, being in the form of God and counting it no prize to be on an equality with God, emptied himself in order that he might assume the form and likeness of men, what was this emptying of himself, this kenosis, in which his estate of humiliation began? The biblical phrase evidently describes a process which stands chronologically back of the historic incarnation itself, and is its necessary ground and condition: what was this process? Did it involve an actual depotentiation or renunciation, such that the incarnate Son no longer possessed the attributes of Deity? Did he become a man in any such sense or measure as to lose for the time the consciousness of his true and proper divinity? Did he cease to be very God of very God, in taking on himself the aspect and the conditions of our humanity? Was the abnegation such that he lost in fact any quality or constituent, that belonged to him essentially in that eternity from which he came and dwelt among us in order that we might behold his glory? There is great danger that such speculative questions may be pushed too far,—especially at the point where they tend to impair on one side or another our sense of the perfect mediatorship. A mysterious submission of the Son to the will of the Father, a certain subordination in position and choice and act, seems to be involved in the very idea of mediation, and also to be of necessity consequent on his surrendery to the limitations of our nature and of our narrow life. In some of his words and experiences there appears also what we are constrained to interpret as a partial or occasional suspension, in the exercise of those attributes and perfections which belonged to him as divine. But assuredly we are not permitted to suppose that he gave up such divine attributes, or surrendered any of his divine perfections,

or was any less or any other than God during his Messiahship. Our Lord could not have laid aside anything that belonged inherently to his divine personality, or dispossessed himself of any essential quality in his divine nature, or carried his abnegation of himself to such extent as to lose his conscious grasp upon his true and proper divinity. We certainly have no right to extend so far our analysis of his constitutional peculiarities, as a being at once divine and human, as to warrant any such conclusions as these. Dorner (Hist. Prot. Theol.) declares it a heathenish error, a *blasphemia*, to say that the Logos himself was emptied, or that Jesus had even according to his divinity laid aside his power and majesty, in order to receive them again in the estate of exaltation. Strange indeed and on many sides inexplicable was the contrast between what he was eternally, and what he became when for our salvation he took upon himself our nature and became a man. Yet this marvelous kenosis which historically began in Bethlehem, but was continuous throughout his career, and ended only on Calvary and in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, is with all its sacred mystery one of the fundamental truths in our holy faith—a truth back of the incarnation and all that follows in the earthly life, yet illustrated throughout that life, even down to its tragic close. That Christian theology of all schools and names should agree in emphasizing this cardinal though mysterious fact, however various or even discordant in their measurements and explanations of it, is not surprising to any thoughtful student of the Book wherein it is so emphatically and continuously affirmed.

5. Two natures and one person, constituting the Immanuel.

Taking up now the confessional statements respecting the two natures in the one person of the Immanuel, we enter at once upon grave perplexities. The statement of the Confession (VIII : ii) is the most elaborate to be found in Protestant symbolism. It has been questioned whether it is not too elaborate, too highly specialized, for practical service in a general creed. It is noticeable, however, that the Westminster divines did not care to use all the abstract and cumulative language of the Athanasian or even the Nicene symbol in such description. They seem to have preferred the calmer and more philosophic statement of the Council of Chalcedon; and some of the phrases employed, as we shall see, are simply translations of the terminology of that ancient formula. The Reformation creeds, while agreed in the distinct enunciation of the doctrine, vary widely in the extent of their analysis and exposition. Some follow the Catechism of Luther in the simple affirmation that

Christ was true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary. The Formula of Concord not only declares (Art. III), Christ to be true God and true man, but adds the explanation that in him the divine and human natures are personally (personaliter) united. The Heidelberg Catechism (35) affirms that Christ was and continues to be the eternal Son of God, but took upon him the very nature of man, of the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary . . . so that he might also be the true seed of David. Similar explanations occur in the First Helvetic, the French, the Belgic and the Scotch Confessions, while in the Second Helvetic we find an entire chapter concerning Christ, Vero Deo et Homine, with a specific condemnation of the various heresies, all and singular, which up to that time had been broached on this subject within the Christian Church.

It has already been said that the union of the divine and the human in the incarnation is, and must forever remain, in some aspects an ineffable mystery. The term, *nature*, as here employed indicates on the one side that which is substantial or constitutional in God as the absolute Spirit,—that which makes him essentially what he is, as differentiated from any of his creatures. As applied to man, the term must retain the same or very similar meaning,—that which is essential or inherent in man as a being, and which differentiates him from other orders of existence. And if we speak of two natures, the divine and the human, as combined or blended in Christ, we must hold, not with ancient Eutychianism that the human nature is simply absorbed or lost in the divine as a drop of water in the ocean, nor with some recent kenotists that the divine nature loses itself, suffers occultation, becomes altogether limited and finite, in virtue of its blending with the human; but rather that the two natures are in some way so conjoined and unified as to become the unique and single basis for the one peculiar Personality. The Confession emphasizes the presence of the human nature in the strong phrase, *with all the essential properties and common infirmities* (or finite limitations) *thereof, yet without sin*. But it gives no countenance to the opinion that by its union with such human nature the divine nature, inherent eternally in Christ and constituting him what he was as the very Son of God, was in any way impaired, depotentiated, lost. Rather is it true that, while the divine condescends to be blended with the human, and to share in its essential properties and limitations, the human is also lifted up, glorified, endowed with more than its normal energy and completeness, in virtue of that union. The man Christ Jesus was certainly more and loftier than any mortal man. As

Hooker says, the incarnation of the Son of God consisteth merely in the union of natures, which union doth add perfection to the weaker, but to the nobler no alteration at all.

The Council of Chalcedon had gone to the outer verge of both thought and language in the affirmation that the two natures are to be recognized and acknowledged as existing in Christ inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly and inseparably,—the distinction of natures being by no means taken away or obliterated by the union, but rather the properties of each nature being fully preserved and manifested within the one personality. And the Westminster divines followed this ancient symbol almost literally in their description, (VIII:ii) of *two whole, perfect and distinct natures*, the Godhead and the manhood, inseparably joined together in one person, *without conversion, composition or confusion.* They thus guarded, so far as human language could guard, against certain errors which have existed in the church from the age of Chalcedon until now,—errors affirming the too wide separation of the two natures on one side, or the obliteration or ignoring of either nature on the other. May it not be that in this attempt to go farther than any preceding Confession of Protestantism had done, and to supply a complete definition and analysis, they fell into the mistake of supposing it possible for the mind of man to solve the mystery, not merely of the incarnation itself as a gracious fact, but also of the mode in which the Son of God for our salvation became man, and took upon him the essential qualities of humanity in the person of the Immanuel?

That mystery comes back upon us at once with even greater force whenever we attempt to define the other crucial term, *person.* For it was not simply a divine nature assuming a human nature, but a divine Person who descended and dwelt among us, assuming in the language of the Catechisms not only *a true body* but also *a reasonable soul.* It was not the body only, but also the reasonable or thinking and conscious soul of Jesus of Nazareth, which the second person in the Holy Trinity thus inhabited. The divine intellect resided and expressed itself in and through the human intellect; the divine sensibility flowed in and through the human sensibility; the divine will acted in and through the human will, as truly and really as the divine essence incarnated itself in the physical organism of our Lord. Yet this combination was not, as ancient Nestorianism regarded it, a moral union merely,—two persons, the one divine and the other human, agreeing to dwell together in holy concord, and to act together in all that concerns salvation. We have here, in other words, more than a God and a

man in blessed companionship, each moving in his own sphere and measure independently, but both conjoined in complete harmony in the common task of human salvation. The divine person did not take to himself an individual human person simply, but that nature which belongs alike to all human persons: the opposite view involves inevitably a dual personality which would be neither divine nor human.

Nor can we accept the singular notion so long sporadically present in the mediaeval church, that Christ was simply a *Filius Adoptivus*, a man chosen or adopted to be the medium of the divine manifestation, and endowed to this end with preternatural and even divine powers and prerogatives,—a certain form of sonship included. The conception of a man thus endued with divine capacities and prerogatives, and in this way elevated into vital union with God, is radically antagonistic to the biblical view of the Son of God as robing himself in human nature and, in the phrase of the Confession, *becoming man*. Nor was this union such that we may properly attribute to Christ two intellects, or two wills, or two separate consciousnesses, or on the Zwinglian theory of *allæosis* divide his acts into two antithetic classes, or assign them exclusively to either of his natures as separate. Against that theory the Confession seeks to guard us in the statement (VIII : vii) that in the work of mediation Christ *acteth according to both natures*, each nature doing in each act what is proper to itself; and in the further statement that by reason of the unity of the one person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature. While this statement is perhaps not all that might be desired, it is sufficient to protect our minds against any such analysis of the acts of Christ as might suggest the error of a double personality as resident in him. The mysterious yet sublime fact is that the divine Person condescended to put himself under the limitations, not merely of an actual body, but of a reasonable soul also, so that we see in all his acts as our Mediator not man only or mainly, but God with us, Immanuel. Nor can any inferences be wisely drawn from his eating or sleeping, his apparent increase in wisdom, his supposed limitations of knowledge respecting the future, or even his agony in Gethsemane or his outcry on the Cross, which would lead us to lose our belief that he was at each and every moment of his life conscious of the supreme truth that he was indeed the Son of God, as well as our one and only Mediator. To this conception of one Person, and that Person truly divine, inhabiting our human nature physical and

spiritual, and revealing himself alike in both, we must ever cling as a truth cardinal in the Christian system.

6. Error on either side to be avoided: Composite view essential.

Protestant symbolism defined its own position on this cardinal doctrine very largely by its condemnation of this or that specific error respecting the nature or the person of the Immanuel. The French Confession unites with Calvin himself in saying: We detest all the heresies that have of old troubled the church, and especially the diabolical conceits of Servetus which attribute a fantastical divinity to the Lord Jesus. The Scotch Confession, after describing our Lord as the seed of David, the Angel of the great counsel of God, the very Messias promised, whom we confess and acknowledge Emmanuel, adds: Be quilk our Confessioun we condemne the damnable and pestilent heresies of Arius, Marcion, Eutyches, Nestorius, and sik uthers as either did denie the eternitie of his God-head, or the veritie of his humaine nature, or confounded them, or zit divided them. And the Second Belgic Confession still more elaborately declares: We abominate the impious doctrine of Arius and the Arians against the Son of God, and especially the blasphemies of Michael Servetus and all his disciples, which Satan through them has as it were drawn from hell, and audaciously and impiously scattered through the earth: We abominate the dogma of the Nestorians which makes two persons of the one Christ, and especially execrate the insanity (vesania) of Eutyches and the Monothelites and Monophysites, which wars against his true and proper human nature.

The Westminster Symbols indulge in no such damnatory declarations, but aim by express terminology and careful discrimination to rule out the particular heresies which the earlier Confessions had so emphatically condemned. These heresies are easily grouped into three classes;—the first setting aside, as ancient Monarchianism and certain Gnostic and Docetic schools and Apollinarianism also did, the complete human element in Christ;—the second rejecting the divine element in its proper fullness, as Arius and the Sabellians and their cognate errorists did;—the third, proposing some superficial and inadequate statement as to the combination of these two elements in the one Person with his twofold nature, at once Son of God and Son of man. And contemplating these three clusters of heresy in the light of Scripture, we at once discern not only their inadequacy as explanations of the biblical teaching, but also their dangerous quality and influence when used to set forth the work as well as the person of our Immanuel. In

that blessed light it seems impossible to question, with modern Unitarianism, whether Christ was truly God manifest in the flesh, and no less impossible to question, as some theorists have done, whether he was an actual, not an apparitional or spectral man, our veritable brother and thus made our adequate Redeemer. Nor under the guidance of the revealing Word can we find rest in the conclusion that he was a man in part only, having body and soul but no human spirit, or that he was a duplex being, a divine person and a human person acting together for our salvation, yet in an interior sense separate or dependent. In the light of the inspired Scriptures these opinions each and all appear not only inadequate and partial, but erroneous and fraught with spiritual mischiefs.

It may safely be admitted, however, that we have here an illustration of the fact that it is often much easier to rule out an error when once fairly understood, than to formulate in sufficient exactness the divine truth to which that error stands opposed. We may protect ourselves against spiritual harm by the elimination of a perceptible heresy, while at the same time we may be unable to define to our own mental satisfaction the antithetic doctrine to which our souls are earnestly clinging. We have also here a very graphic and painful illustration of the fact that it is much easier to interpret the teaching of Scripture on such recondite themes in a fragmentary way rather than in its totality, and then to frame a statement based on certain passages or sections of Holy Writ, meanwhile ignoring other sections or passages whose recognition is no less indispensable to a full and rounded view of the truth involved. It is an obvious fact that nearly every heresy which has ever risen in the Church respecting the person of our Lord, has sprung from some biblical expression,—as that of Arius sprang from the Pauline phrase, the first-born of every creature. Our supreme task and duty therefore, here as elsewhere, is to gather up the entire teaching of the inspired Word, and to formulate the truth, if at all, in a statement or canon which the entire Word will justify. No other course is consistent with true loyalty either to Scripture or to Him who gave it to be the light as well as life of men. And if in the interpretation of the Word, or in the use of such occult terms as *nature* and *person* to describe its complete teaching respecting the Immanuel, we find ourselves confronted at some points with impenetrable mystery, it is infinitely better to pause and bow in holy reverence, than to seek relief from the pressure of that mystery by framing some inadequate and innutritious dogma for ourselves, out of what we may gather from

some section or fragment of the Bible. It surely takes away nothing from the supreme reasonableness of our trust in Christ, or from our joy in him as our only and adorable Savior, if we do not comprehend him in all the interior elements and the organic composition of his sacred Person.

7. Mediation: its nature and necessity.

Before proceeding to the study of the Immanuel in his blessed offices as Mediator, as this chapter (VIII) describes him, it will be essential to consider briefly the fundamental idea of mediation itself. The term signifies in general any intervention between parties at variance, for the purpose of adjusting difficulty or effecting reconciliation. This intervention is always a personal act in one form or another, though varying widely in its manifestations. It may be undertaken with the consent of both parties at variance, or of one only, or in some instances where neither party desires such intervention. It may vary in extent also, according to the nature and amount of the disagreement to be adjusted. It may be accomplished in various ways, whether by personal influence and persuasion, or by acts or measures calculated to satisfy or conciliate one or both of the alienated parties. Illustrations frequently occur in common life, in which through such mediation those who have been averse or hostile, have been brought together and reconciled. Other illustrations occur from time to time where nations which have been at variance respecting certain rights or interests, and perhaps have sought to maintain their several prerogatives through the test of actual warfare, have submitted the issue at stake to the arbitrament of other nations, and by such intervention have become reconciled. In a modified form, mediation appears in cases where, when a person has committed some offense against law, an intervening person becomes an advocate, in order to secure acquittal or some melioration of penalty, or an intercessor to plead for the pardon of one convicted of crime. Still another modified form appears in cases where one man becomes a surety or bondsman for another, or provides for the payment of a debt which the party arraigned is unable to meet. The Bible in fact employs most of these illustrations drawn from human life, to set forth that gracious intervention which Christ has undertaken. The abundance and variety of such examples deserve to be carefully noted, since all are designed and grouped to bring into clearer light that mediating work of Christ on which all our hopes of salvation rest.

The necessity for such mediation lies, not in what man is as man,

but in what man is as a sinner, alienated from God and in danger of perishing forever in that alienation, unless some gracious intervention shall occur. If man were not sinful, there would be no such alienation, and therefore no need of a Mediator: it is human sin which creates that necessity. Viewed as a transgression or neglect of divine law, as revolt against the divine authority, as an enthronement of self in the place of God, sin at once impels the soul away from God and constrains it to a separate, rebellious life. The sinner, like Adam and Eve, shrinks from contact with Deity, and instinctively hides himself from the divine presence. He also passes by an inevitable process from one stage of indulgence and hostility to another and, if left to himself, would continue—so far as we can see—in his separation and his alienation forever. Were God to bestow his providential mercies continually, and to manifest in no way his disapproval of the sin, return to the allegiance and obedience due him would still become less and less probable,—less and less possible. There might be occasional conviction, some pangs of remorse, a degree of terror in the contemplation of such a downward and destructive course, but the alienation would continue, and the dark and dreadful revolt go on in the sinful breast eternally.

But such a process also involves of necessity, not a like alienation or abhorrence on the part of God, but a progressive withdrawal of his countenance and favor, and a gradual separation from the sinner, such as a just parent would be compelled to manifest in the case of a disobedient child. God might not cease to love the transgressor, but he could not equitably treat him as if he had never transgressed. He could not regard him with that love of complacency, as it has been called, with which he contemplates the holy angels, or the sanctified in glory, or the true saint on earth. He might pity, might exercise true compassion and patience, but he could not act as if he were indifferent to the sin, or treat the sinner as if he were worthy. The paternal face must be hid in a measure from the offender; the sovereign must frown upon the rebel; the judge must manifest his purpose to convict and condemn. The violated law must utter its voice of rebuke and warning; the alienation on the part of God must assume a judicial as well as personal aspect. All the relationships between the parties must of necessity be changed and deranged—more and more changed and deranged as the process of evil goes on. And unless some adequate intervention can be brought in, this derangement of relationship, like the evil inwrought into the sinful character, must continue forever.

The mediatorial intervention provided must thus be twofold in its effect, internal and external:—a change in the temper and purpose must be wrought, as well as a change in the relations into which the sin of man has brought both parties. What is needed first of all is such a spiritual transformation of the sinner himself as shall both incline him to return to God in loving devotion, and justify God in welcoming him back to the divine embrace and service. The salvation needed must begin with and in this interior transformation. The soul must first of all be brought through grace into the exercise of those emotions, and the willing performance of those duties, which God has a right to claim. It must be admitted that the Symbols dwell more emphatically on the exterior change which the mediation of Christ seeks to induce, as the antecedent Protestant creeds had already done. In other words, they contemplate the objective more than the subjective side of this mediatorial work,—what Christ does for us in the restoring of these disordered relationships, rather than what he does within us in the restoration of our corrupted nature to a state of love and holiness. The Heidelberg Catechism has been regarded with some justice as an exception to this general tendency in the Protestantism of the sixteenth century. But if we turn to the other creeds, such as the Helvetic, or the French, we shall find many evidences of the opposite fact. It was indeed one of the acutest charges of Romanism against the Protestantism of that century, that it had separated too widely our justification and our sanctification through Christ and, while exalting justification unduly, had lost sight of that interior work within the soul itself which the term, sanctification, describes. In more recent times the same allegation in substance has been made, not wholly without warrant, by Lutheranism against Calvinism,—since the latter type of theology, following its great leader, has always laid special, perhaps extreme, stress on what has just been termed the objective side of salvation.

It will be needful to recur again in another connection to this interesting query. But for the present it is sufficient to note, that mediation in such a case as this must cover the whole matter in issue,—must be such as will secure a radical change, both in the relationships subsisting between God as Sovereign and Father, Lawgiver and Judge, and the offending and criminal sinner, and also in the heart of that sinner and in the feeling with which God will regard and deal with him. Cudworth forcibly stated the complex truth in his declaration, (Sermon before Parliament,) that Christ came into the world as well to redeem us from the power

and bondage of our sins as to free us from the guilt of them. The end of the Gospel, he adds, is life and perfection,—to make us partakers of the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, without which salvation itself were but a notion. There must be no part of the malady introduced by sin which that mediation will not prove itself effectual to cure, no conflict which it cannot sooth to repose, no alienation which it cannot transform into love and amity, and an eternal union of the renewed soul with its reconciled God. So the Confession declares (VIII:i) that through Christ sinners are *redeemed, called, justified, sanctified and glorified;* and in the list of the benefits of such mediation, given in the Larger Catechism, (57, et seq) we find all that is requisite subjectively as well as objectively to complete salvation.

Here we may return to the contemplation of Him whom we have learned to regard as God with us, in this specific work of mediation.

8. Christ as Mediator: his qualifications: official appointment.

What he has done in other spheres such as creation or providential administration, need not here be considered: his gracious and glorious mediation should for the time command our entire interest. It is a fine illustration of the broad intellectual range of the Westminster divines and of their skill in language, that they styled this chapter, one of the most remarkable in the entire Confession, not a chapter on Christ as Son of God or Son of man, neither on Christ the Savior or Redeemer, Prophet or Priest or King, but on *Christ the Mediator*,—the Mediator who, standing between God and man, and recognizing their variance as induced by sin, took upon himself the mighty task of removing all hindrances, satisfying all just demands, expressing all needful feeling, showing forth all requisite grace, and thus actually securing an instant, a perfect, an everlasting reconciliation between God and every truly penitent sinner, not in one land or age but for all lands and all times.

The term, Mediator, is indeed frequently found, though with less exact and comprehensive meaning, in several antecedent creeds. Zwingli in his Articles (19) declares Christ the only Mediator (ein einiger Mittler) between God and man. The First Helvetic Conf. describes him as sole mediator, intercessor, surety, and at the same time priest and lord, and our king. The Second Helvetic devotes a chapter (V) to the *unicum mediatorem:* sufficit nobis Deus et mediator Christus. The Catechism of Heidelberg confesses (36) that he is our Mediator, who with his innocence and perfect holiness covers (or covers over) in the sight of God the sins which we have committed. The French Conf. (XIX)

declares that we should have no access to the Father except through this Mediator and advocate; the Belgic Conf. (XXVI) says that this Mediator whom the Father hath appointed between him and us, ought in no wise to affright us by his majesty, or cause us to seek another according to our fancy; and the Scotch Confession teaches (VIII) that in assuming our nature Christ became our Mediator, while the Irish Articles contain the exact heading, *Of Christ the Mediator*, which we have found in the Westminster Confession.

That Christ as Immanuel had all the inherent and all the official qualifications requisite to the accomplishment of a task so mighty, so sublime as this mediation between God and man, the Symbols abundantly teach us. At no point do they appeal more frequently or carefully to Holy Scripture, realizing both how fundamental the doctrine must ever be in Christian theology, and how vital the truth is in all evangelical and saving experience. Their loving portrayal of him whom they set forth as the one and only Mediator is so full and exact, so warm and glowing in its tone, so powerful in its conclusiveness, as to leave little more to be desired. His inherent qualifications appear in his divine personality, his true humanity, and his entire sinlessness—the last as essential as each of the preceding. The quality of absolute sinlessness in Christ is everywhere in Protestant symbolism insisted upon;—as in the Thirty-Nine Articles (XV), where it is said that Christ in the truth of our nature (veritate) was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which he was clearly void, both in his flesh and in his spirit. His official qualifications are seen in his appointment by the Father to this service, in his voluntary assumption of the mediatorial office, and in his acceptableness on the part of both God and man,—so far as sinful man consents to any such gracious intervention. The Confession (VIII : iii) describes his endowments specifically, as one sanctified and anointed, having all treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all fullness dwelling in him, holy and harmless and undefiled, and full of grace and truth, in order that he *might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a Mediator.* And it adds the further fact that he took not this office on himself, but was *thereunto called by his Father, who put all power and judgment into his hand.* The Larger Catechism (38–40) proceeds further to give a series of specific reasons why he should be both God and man in one person, in order that he might possess all the qualifications, inherent and official, requisite in this mediatorship, and affirms that he was *fully furnished with all authority and ability* for that transcendent service. The absolute

fitness of Christ at every point for the unique function of mediation is assumed again and again elsewhere in the Symbols,—as in the original Directory for Worship, where prayer is justified and encouraged specifically on the ground of such mediation.

It is incumbent upon us to pause at this point, and recognize with distinctness and with reverence the vital significance of this conception of Christ the Mediator as a central element in the Christian scheme. As all that is antecedent in evangelical theology leads on directly to Christ as the theanthropic Person, so all that relates to him and his mission among men centers in this view of him as a Mediator, inherently and officially qualified for such a service, and actually engaged in the task of reconciling God and man through his gracious intervention. If Christ is not thus a qualified and anointed Mediator, competent to accomplish the reconciliation needful, he can be nothing to us but a sublime and perplexing mystery forever. Everything in Christianity is concentered at this point. Systems of religious belief that reject this mediation cannot be regarded as Christian. The recognition of Christ in the grandeur of his teaching, in the beauty of his character, in the attractiveness of his example, is wholly insufficient here. What the sinful world needs is not a teacher only, or a pattern of holy living or a princely character among men only, but a Mediator, who really undertakes to meet the needs of the sinner both internal and external, and who actually brings about a complete and everlasting reconciliation between sinners and God. Further questions will arise respecting the essential elements in such mediation, the way in which such reconciliation is effected, the instruments and forces employed, the steps taken, the conditions required, the grace granted; and around some of these questions, as we shall have occasion to see, Christian minds are still too much at variance. But here, at this central point, evangelical Christendom has been and is and must ever be essentially agreed: all churches and schools and parties alike recognize both the necessity of such theanthropic mediation, and the cardinal fact of facts that there is one and but one such Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

The Catechisms further distribute the mediatorial office into three main functions, the prophetic, the priestly and the kingly; and proceed to show how in each of these functions our Lord executes the office of a Mediator; his mediation becoming complete only when these are harmoniously blended into one comprehensive intervention. The Sum of

9. The three Offices: reason for this analysis: objections.

Saving Knowledge happily embodies the confessional doctrine in the statement that Christ Jesus was clad with the threefold office of Prophet, Priest and King,—made a Prophet in order to reveal all saving knowledge to his people, and to persuade them to believe and obey the same; – made a Priest to offer up himself a sacrifice once for them all, and to intercede continually with the Father for making their persons and services acceptable to him;—and made a King to subdue them to himself, to feed and rule over them by his appointed ordinances, and to defend them from their enemies.

Dorner (Christ. Doct.), regards this threefold conception of the mediatorial work of Christ as having its ultimate ground in the threefold service of Revelation itself, as indicated in the three terms, instruction, atonement, obedience. Christ, it has been said by another European divine, must be a prophet to save us from the ignorance of sin, a priest to save us from its guilt, and a king to save us from its dominion in our flesh. Others find the primal warrant for it in the three offices of the Old Testament—sacerdotal, royal, didactic—viewed as antetypes of him in whom these three offices are conjoined, and on whose head this triple crown of function and ministry is fitly placed. Still others have found a psychological basis for it in the nature of man as composed of intellect, feeling and will,—Christ thus adjusting himself as teacher and sacrifice and lord to these three primal capabilities in man, regarded as a moral being. The distinction was recognized in Christian theology as early as Eusebius who (B. I: Ch. iii), describes Christ as the divine and heavenly Word, the only high priest of all men, the only king of all creation, and the Father's supreme prophet of prophets. Calvin introduced it into Protestant thought in the statement (Inst. B 2: 15), that the office assigned to Christ by the Father consisted of three parts,—he being commissioned as at once a prophet, a priest and a king. It was accepted almost universally in the Reformed churches; and extensively—so far at least as the priestly and regal offices are concerned—in Lutheran circles also. Christ, says Martensen, is the Mediator of the new covenant, by his testimony, by his propitiatory sacrifice, and by the founding of the kingdom of which he is Lord and Head.

Vigorous objections have been raised to this distribution by Ernesti, and by some later German theologians such as Knapp and Ritschl,—partly on exegetical grounds, as unwarranted by any adequate indications in Scripture; and partly on the general ground that it tends to confusion in the conception of the one comprehensive office of mediation, and introduces into that conception some elements which do not properly belong to it. It has

been questioned on one side whether these three terms actually include the whole of that mediation,—whether in the large number of metaphors, for example, by which Christ is set forth in the Scriptures, such as Word and Life and Light and many more, there is not much in the way of gracious interposition in our behalf which neither the prophetic nor the priestly nor the kingly function, nor all three together, if strictly interpreted, adequately represent. On the other side it has been queried whether these three terms, when technically expounded and applied as they have been in much Calvinistic theology, do not contain some things which in fact are not involved in the comprehending term, mediation. It is especially urged that our Lord himself never recognized these technical distinctions in his mediatorial work,—that while he spoke occasionally of himself as king, he hardly referred to himself distinctively as prophet, and never called himself a priest, though alluding sometimes to his final sacrifice; and it is claimed that such a scholastic distribution, which our Lord himself never distinctly suggested, can have on one hand but doubtful value in itself, and on the other is liable to mislead into technical or theologic rather than scriptural conceptions of his mediatorial office: Van Oosterzee, Christ. Dogmatics.

In addition to the reply to such objections to be derived, as we have seen, from the general trend of Christian theology, it is a fact of special significance that our Lord is actually, and more or less elaborately, described in such terms as prophet, teacher, priest, sacrifice, intercessor, lord and king, in most of the earlier Protestant creeds, as well as in the Symbols. One of the marked illustrations of this may be seen in the answer to the question (31) in the Heidelberg Catechism, why is Christ called the Anointed or the Messiah? Because he is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief prophet and teacher, who fully reveals to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and our only high priest, who by the one sacrifice of his body has redeemed us, and ever liveth to make intercession for us with the Father; and our eternal king, who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and defends and preserves us in the redemption obtained for us. Additional illustrations, though less extensive, may be found in other continental formularies. The Scotch Confession also declares Christ to be the Messiah promised, the only head of his church, our just lawgiver, our only high priest, advocate and mediator, and our sovereign and supreme governor. Turning from confessional to biblical teaching we are certainly warranted in the conclusion that this analysis of

the mediatorial office is justified substantially, if not in the words of Christ himself, still in the epistolary Scriptures, written after his decease had made his prophetic, and especially his priestly and kingly functions, more palpable to the eye of faith than they could previously have been. It certainly is biblical truth that as our Mediator he instructs, reconciles, restores; reveals and procures and confers salvation,—ministering thus in a threefold way to the threefold necessity which sin has introduced.

There are, however, some special liabilities to which this analysis exposes us, and against which we should be carefully guarded. In general, it is important to protect ourselves against the supposition that these three terms, or indeed any human terms, can set forth adequately in all his fullness and glory this one adorable Mediator. Careful study of the multiplied, strong, luminous, impressive images and illustrations employed in Scripture to describe him and his work, will impress us with the conviction that our Lord is immeasurably too great to be adequately described by any analysis or language of man. It is important also to remember that the three functions are never wholly separable in fact, but are always interblended in each and every mediatorial act,—the one Person acting alike and simultaneously in each function. Still less are we at liberty to regard them as divisible chronologically; the prophetic function closing before the priestly begins, the priestly ended before the kingship is assumed. Christ was in fact a king as truly as he was a prophet in his first public teaching,—as truly a prophet as he was a king when he stood before Pilate at his final trial,—and as truly a priest at the beginning of his mediation as when he was nailed, our blessed sacrifice, on the cross of Calvary.

Neither may we set these three functions over against each other in any aspect of contrast, as if some one were intrinsically more important than another in its bearings on our salvation. While it is true that the priestly and sacrificial function seems generally central in the biblical delineation, yet the prophetic function is no less apparent and needful though introductory, or the kingly though consequent: all are parts of like import in the one sublime transaction. It is an obvious and painful fact that some Calvinistic theologies have erroneously ignored both the prophetic and the kingly function, treating them as only in some secondary sense mediatorial, and have meanwhile emphasized the priestly function exclusively, as if our salvation depended on this chiefly or altogether. In some instances, the analytic impulse has gone so far as to locate the salvatory power of the mediation, not merely in the

priestly function as a whole, but in Christ the sacrifice rather than in Christ the priest; and in some instances it has limited the sacrifice itself to what is called the passive, as distinct from the active obedience of Christ. We shall have occasion to study these analytic processes hereafter: it is sufficient now to note that by such processes the essential unities of the one great work of mediation are very largely obscured from view, the real grandeur of the one sublime intervention being sadly dissipated through such excessive analysis and specialization. As one result, the prophetic function of our Lord as the one perfect teacher and example for our humanity, has been suffered to fall too largely into the hands of errorists who, emphasizing his teachings and his human perfections, have rejected his sacrificial ministry, and spurned his divine kingship. As another result, such illusive analyses have led to narrow views of what salvation truly is, as a gracious process in character as well as a blessed change in condition; and in some instances to serious error respecting the real relation to this perfect Redeemer of a soul saved through his grace. That no small portion of the Calvinistic theology of the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth century is open to the charge of such undue specialization, and even of destructive trituration of the one mediatorial work, will be apparent to any thoughtful student of the period. It is incumbent upon us carefully to guard against such delusive misconceptions, and ever to hold before our vision the Immanuel, who is at once and equally our prophet, our priest and our king, and who in all these functions is evermore our one adorable Mediator.

10. Christ as Prophet: our teacher; our supreme example.

The first of the three offices or functions just considered represents Christ as the supreme teacher and example for mankind,—the chief and head of the prophetical order. In the Shorter Catechism (24) it is said that he executeth the office of a prophet *in revealing to us by his Word and Spirit the will of God for our salvation.* This is expanded in the Larger Catechism (43) in the statement that Christ reveals that will, not to the individual believer alone, but *to the church in all ages;* that this is done *in divers ways of administration;* and that the *whole will of God in all things* is thus made known, so far as our edification as well as salvation requires. The Confession (VIII : i) simply styles him prophet as well as priest and king—a prophet endowed with all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and full of grace and truth; but fails to tell us in what ways, and in what directions, the prophetical function is exercised, except

in the statement that he reveals to his elect, in and by the Word, *the mysteries of salvation*. This omission may be explained in part by the fact that in the chapter on Holy Scripture it had been said already, that it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and to declare his will to his church, though this indeed seems a generic rather than a specific and personal work of revelation. Further explanation may be found in expressions scattered here and there through subsequent chapters, descriptive of the ministries of Christ by his Word and Spirit for the instruction and edifying of his people. But no such distinct exposition of the prophetic function appears in the Confession as we find respecting the priestly or even the kingly function of the Mediator. In the Sum of Saving Knowledge Christ is said to be made a prophet, to reveal all saving knowledge to his people, and to persuade them to believe and obey the same,—a divine witness, preaching the good tidings of the covenant, not only by the holy prophets, but with his own mouth. Some meagerness of statement on this subject is apparent in the Protestant symbolism generally—a meagerness which is explained, at least in large degree, by the prominence given in the Reformation to the priestly sacrifice of Christ for the believer, in contrast with the priestly ceremonials of Rome. Faith in a crucified Savior being set forth as the basis of the entire doctrine of justification, it was natural that the eyes of all should be fixed on the cross, and on the atoning Person who hung thereon, rather than on him who came also to be the great prophet and teacher of mankind.

The conception of Christ as a prophet is purely a biblical conception. As the eternal Logos he was a prophet by nature as well as by appointment. His prophetical function was foretold even in the pentateuchal era, and still more fully in the prophetic age. He was regarded as a prophet not only by his disciples, but by the multitudes who heard him during his ministry. The Apostles recognized and revered him as the Word of God and the Wisdom of God, and pronounced him the head and crown of the prophetic order. This prophetical function was to be carried on partly by the direct communication and inculcation of saving truth, and partly by the indirect effect of his personality and his example as an illustration of such truth. Like the Hebrew prophets, Christ was a prophet in a twofold sense—in the general sense of religious teaching, and in the special sense of foretelling the future. As a teacher he was the divine consummation of the prophetic order, surpassing all who preceded or followed him, alike in the breadth and grandeur of his utterances, in the manner in which he

presented and commended truth, and in the majestic authoritativeness which marked all his instructions. Never man spake like this man, was the spontaneous outcry of those who heard him while he was on the earth, and this is the profound conviction of those who in later times have studied his words, and appreciated the doctrines which he proclaimed. Other prophets spake as under commission and under limitations: he taught as on his own authority, with absolute freedom. He explained and made luminous all antecedent teaching; and the later inspired writers aimed only to publish and illustrate the truth which he had given. Calvin simply expresses the belief of every true disciple when he declares in brief, that all the parts and branches of perfect wisdom are contained in the sum of doctrine which he imparted. And Bishop Butler affirms (Anal. P. II: Ch. V) that Christ not only published anew the law of nature which men have corrupted, and confirmed by the evidence of testimony the truth of the moral system of nature, but distinctly revealed the manner in which God should be worshiped, the need and efficacy of repentance, and the fact of future reward and punishment; thus becoming a prophet in a sense in which no other ever was—the Prophet that should come into the world.

As a foreteller of the future, our Lord surpassed all the sacred seers who had gone before him in the extent and scope, in the comprehensiveness and brilliance and the vast moment of his predictions. Others spoke and recorded what was supernaturally revealed to them: he uttered his prophecies as one animated by conscious certainty—as if the future was as truly known to his mind as the present or the past. Passing by one supposed exception to this transcendent fact, which in reality is no exception, we see in his predictions the abundant proof of his omniscience. They relate not only to the manner and time and circumstances of his own death, the subsequent experiences of his disciples, and the destruction of Jerusalem,—not only to the first diffusion of the Gospel, the upbuilding and triumphs of his church, and the mighty changes which his religion was to effect in human society in coming ages. They include even the millennial era, the end of the Gospel dispensation, his own second advent, and the time and manner and meaning of the final judgment of mankind. They carry our thought onward to eternity, and show us what is to be the condition of the human race millions of ages hence. All that had been foretold by other seers, he took up and explained and expanded; and what it had not been given to them to see of the things that should be hereafter, he saw, described, and affirmed.

More than he has told us, no holy prophet was ever commissioned to reveal: more than he has told us, our humanity does not need in this life to know.

But while our Lord was a prophet directly in this twofold sense as teacher and foreteller, he was also a prophet indirectly but no less forcibly, in his exemplification of divine truth in his own personality and life. That personality and life were as truly a part of his mediatorship as his sacrifice on Calvary. The Bible furnishes many illustrations of the fact that teaching is done quite as efficiently by what men are as by what they say. The personal qualities and experiences of many of the prophets, major and minor, their individual peculiarities, their very names in some instances, are seen to contribute some important elements to their personal mission and influence as religious teachers. In other words, their characters became largely the vehicles in which their messages were conveyed and made effective. And in Christ as the chief prophet, this interesting fact receives its sublimest illustration. His holy personality was indeed the indispensable concomitant of such truth as he, being the eternal Logos, came into the world to reveal. We have already recognized his entire sinlessness as a fundamental element in Christianity. That sinlessness had been foretold in the Messianic psalms, and by the evangelic prophet, Isaiah; it was confessed by Pilate at his trial; it was affirmed by Peter in his first Epistle, taught by the writer to the Hebrews, and believed without questioning by the early church. And this perfect obedience on the part of Christ was an essential element in his prophetical work; without it he could never have taught as he did, or filled the world as he has done, with the glory and the fruitage of his doctrine. The revelation contained in what he was, though less direct, is thus no less needful to us than the revelation contained in his sacred words. His example is the sublimest illustration of his message, and his pattern, no less than his most significant exposition of doctrine and duty, becomes the supreme law of our lives as his disciples. And while we must affirm that his sinless life was not the whole of his prophetic ministry, and still less the whole of his mediatorship, as has been erroneously assumed, it is certainly a most serious mistake to neglect as much as orthodox Protestantism has done hitherto, the exaltation of that spotless life, in all its ineffable beauty and power, as one among the things which constitute him in deed and in truth our mediating Immanuel. Macaulay has justly as well as eloquently said, with reference to the power of this unique characteristic of Christ as the exemplar of mankind:

It was before Deity, embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the pride of the portico, and the fasces of the lictor, and the swords of the thirty legions, were humbled in the dust.

11. Christ as Priest and as Sacrifice: His qualities as both priest and sacrifice.

The Westminster teaching, and that of Protestant symbolism generally, is much more full respecting the priestly function of the Mediator. This function has been comprehensively described as including all that portion of the actings and sufferings of Christ as our Mediator by which he has made it congruous with the holiness and the wisdom of God to deliver sinful men from the penal consequences of their offenses against his moral government, and to restore them to the enjoyment of his immortal favor. This priestly function constitutes the center and substance of the remarkable chapter (VIII) now under consideration. In one section (v) it is said that by his *perfect sacrifice of himself* which he . . . . once offered up unto God, he hath *fully satisfied the justice of his Father*, (or as it is elsewhere, *divine justice*) and thus has *purchased reconciliation* between God and the sinner. In another section (iv) it is said that, in order to secure this result, he was not only made under the law and did perfectly fulfill it, but *endured most grievous torments* immediately in his soul, and *most painful sufferings* in his body; was crucified and died; was buried and remained under the power of death, but saw no corruption. Other sections undertake to explain the manner in which the two natures in Christ, or his duplex nature, shared in this mediatorial sacrifice. Here as throughout the work of mediation, he is said to act according to both natures, each of these natures doing that which is proper (proprium) to itself. Still other sections show us how the benefits of that sacrifice were applicable to those who had lived before his advent, but had exercised faith in a salvation yet to come, and also how certain and effectual the results of this mediation are to every one in all ages who cherishes true faith in him as the anointed high priest and the divinely accepted sacrifice for the world. The Shorter Catechism (25) teaches that Christ executeth the office of a priest in his once *offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice*, and reconcile us to God. And the Larger (44)simply expands the expression by adding the significant words, *a sacrifice without spot*, and by defining the reconciliation as a reconciliation not for here and there a penitent soul, but broadly or generically, *for the sins*

of his people or—as elsewhere—*for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.* Numerous expressions found throughout the Symbols convey the same conception of our Lord as both priest and sacrifice—the one priest and the one sacrifice, and in both aspects the one and only Mediator.

It would be needless to quote at length from the other Protestant Confessions in order to show how universally this general view of the priesthood of Christ was held during the Reformation, and how fundamental they affirmed it to be in its bearings on the great controverted problem of justification by faith in him. One can hardly take up a single creed, even the most minor and incomplete, without finding this doctrine embedded in it as one of the foundations of evangelical belief: see the Augsburg Conf. Art IV; Form. of Concord, Art. III; the Belgic Conf. XXI; the French, XVII; the Second Helv. XV; Heidelberg Catechism (40) and others. And it is well to note that even Roman symbolism, while emphasizing unduly the intermediate functions of the church and its sacraments and priesthood, was obliged in the Decrees of Trent (Ch. VII, on Justification) to say that the meritorious cause of our salvation is our Lord Jesus Christ, who when we were enemies, for the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us, merited justification for us by his most holy passion on the wood of the cross. (in ligno crucis) and made satisfaction for us unto God the Father. And the Orthodox Confession of the Greek church teaches in like manner (45) that Christ being himself without sin, hath purged away our sin and its penalty; and quotes in proof the strong language of Peter that we are thus redeemed, not with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (pretioso sanguine) as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. So broadly and so powerfully has the doctrine of the priesthood and the priestly sacrifice of our Immanuel, resting upon the clear and abundant testimonies of Scripture, secured its place among the fundamental tenets of Christendom.

But Protestantism in later times has gone far beyond Greek or Roman orthodoxy in defining the qualities of Christ as both priest and sacrifice, and in describing the manner in which his offering of himself becomes an acceptable satisfaction to divine justice and to the sacred claims of the divine law. The official qualifications of our Lord for such service were typified in part in those three requisites of the Mosaic priesthood,—personal fitness, direct appointment, actual and acceptable ministration. It should be remembered here that the Mosaic system had throughout on one side an immediate, and on the other a remoter but main

design in the divine plan of redemption. Immediately, it was an unique religious cultus, divinely adapted to work in the Hebrew mind obedience, repentance, faith, consecration, hope, as spiritual experiences. But more remotely yet mainly, it was designed, as the Confession intimates, (VIII:vi) by *promises, types and sacrifices*, to show forth Christ and his coming salvation. Hence the official endowments of the Jewish priest became typical of his official endowments as our Mediator. Still these far surpassed those of the Hebrew priest, and even those of the high priest, in the fact that the person of our Lord had greater inherent dignity and fitness, that his appointment was more conspicuously divine and glorious, that his term of service was more prolonged, and that his offering was one of infinitely greater moment. It was doubtless for this reason that he was also called a priest after the order of Melchizedek,—that strange antetypal person, whose appearance and mission constitute one of the minor mysteries of the Pentateuch. Yet we may never forget that neither the priest in his ordinary dress and office, nor the high priest in his impressive sacerdotal robes, nor even the kingly Melchizedek whose place in Scripture is at once so unique and so honorable, nor all together, can equal Him who for our salvation condescended as a priest to offer himself as a sacrifice on Calvary.

Similar qualifications are seen in him as such a sacrifice—the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, but slain historically on what was at once a cross and an altar. The Hebrew victim must in every case be inherently without blemish, must have adequate value in expression, must be freely offered, and be formally accepted. In Christ these requisites appear in their highest form, and in their supreme valuation. He was intrinsically sinless, flawless, perfect as a sacrifice: his worth as such is set before us in Scripture as infinite; his devotion of himself was complete; he was divinely acceptable, and thus at every point was competent to secure in our behalf all that sacrifice in any form could secure in the interest of reconciliation between us and God. Whatever may be our interpretation of the method in which such a sacrifice is made available for such an end, the transcendent fact that the Mediator was thus at once a perfect priest, offering himself as a perfect sacrifice, and in this act becoming our propitiation before God, stands out before us everywhere on the pages of the Scriptures,—transcendent and in certain aspects full of mystery, but on the other hand replete with a grace and a glory which are manifestly divine. It is of vital moment to emphasize here, as the Symbols do not always seem sufficiently to emphasize, the under-

lying truth that both the priest and the sacrifice just described, are always one and the same theanthropic person. Augustine in the Civitas Dei, (X) points out this double aspect of the priestly mediation in the pregnant sentence: In this form he offered, in that form he was offered; because he is our Mediator he is in this our priest, he is also in that our sacrifice. We are not to suppose, as some of the creeds almost appear to intimate, that the priest is divine and the sacrifice human: still less may we assign some of these qualifications to the Son of God, offering up the man on the altar of mediation, and others to the man, Jesus of Nazareth, as if there were two distinct persons engaged in the great transaction. In other words, we may not analyse the mediatorial intervention, in this priestly form of it, in any such measure as to say where the divine and where the human successively appear, or where either disappears while its opposite is revealed as separate and alone. It is indeed justly said in this chapter that Christ, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and as man as well as God acted and suffered in the process of our redemption. But while we adhere to the doctrine of the two natures thus conjoined in him, we must invariably bear in mind the confessional phrase, two distinct natures *and one person forever*. It is that one Person who acts as priest, and that one Person who suffers as our sacrifice—one and the same mediating Person throughout. And however much it may increase the mystery of the mediating act, we must always reverently remember that he who both offers and is sacrificed, is throughout all his mediatorial work also one in that sacred trinity of Persons who together constitute the one eternal Deity.

12. The term, Satisfaction: its meaning and value.

The nature and scope of the satisfaction rendered by the Mediator as both priest and sacrifice, can be finally considered only in the two subsequent Lectures, which will bring before us in their confessional and theological aspects, first the Plan, then the Process of Salvation—that sublime scheme and economy of grace, in which the mediatorship of Christ in its three parts or functions is the central element, and of whose gracious ministries salvation is the blessed result. But it will be well at this point to consider the emphatic statement in this chapter, that by his perfect obedience and sacrifice he *hath fully satisfied* the justice of his father—or, more broadly, the divine justice—and thus has purchased for all who believe on him not only reconciliation, but all the further blessings which follow thereupon. In the Larger Catechism (57) we are taught that by his mediation (which includes his priestly sacrifice) he *hath procured redemption*, with

all other *benefits of the covenant of grace*,—this implying that his mediation was in whole and in all its parts an actual and a perfect satisfaction. And in the Sum of Saving Knowledge it is quaintly said, that God before the world began gave the elect unto his Son, our Redeemer, upon condition that he would humble himself so far as to assume the human nature, of a soul and a body, unto personal union with his divine nature, and submit himself to the law as surety for them, and *satisfy justice for them by giving obedience in their name*, even unto the suffering of the cursed death of the cross. In like manner the Catechism of Heidelberg (37) affirms that all the time he lived on earth, but especially at the end of his life, Christ bore in body and soul the wrath of God against the sin of the whole human race, in order that by his passion as the only atoning sacrifice, he might redeem our soul and body from everlasting condemnation. The Scotch Confession, after describing in painfully graphic terms the sufferings of the Mediator, declares that he endured all this in body and soul to make full satisfaction for the sins of the people. Such, with considerable variation at specific points, and often with less of detail, are the declarations of the Protestant symbols generally.

The term, satisfaction, appearing first as a technical term in the Cur Deus Homo of Anselm, and adopted throughout the Symbols, has been almost universally accepted in more modern theology as expressing in a general way the mediating work of Christ, but more specifically his priestly sacrifice, viewed as the special propitiation for sin, and the special ground of our reconciliation with God. It has its nearest equivalent in the word, atonement, which appears nowhere in the Symbols or in other kindred formularies, but is universal in Protestant theology, as descriptive of the sacrificial procedure through which salvation is secured, and the sinner becomes henceforth at one with God. Another kindred term is expiation, pointing to that vicarious sacrifice wherein Christ, assuming in some sense the place of sinners, supplies as a substitute an adequate reason for exempting them from the penalty due to their transgressions. The term, satisfaction, as here used, designates not merely the complacent feeling with which the Father regards this atoning or expiatory work, or merely the adequacy or sufficiency of that work, contemplated with respect to the end in view, though both of these elements doubtless enter into the conception. It designates more centrally the mediatorial act in itself, and especially in its sacrificial form,—that salvatory act or process whereby all claims against the sinner are met, and an adequate basis for his redemption is provided.

Viewed as to its contents, the term is employed by some theologians comprehensively as including the active as well as passive obedience of Christ,—his perfect obedience to law as our example, as well as his sufficient sacrifice under law: others limit it to his passive obedience or sacrifice alone, and specially to his submission unto the death of the cross in our behalf. Edwards (Work of Redemption), following Aquinas, runs a line of distinction between the satisfaction and the merit of Christ, in the statement that his satisfaction was designed to free us from misery, as by the payment of the debt we owe as sinners, while his merit purchased happiness for us on the ground of what he has suffered expiatorially in our stead. If we view the satisfaction as including all that is implied in the word, merit, we may with the Symbols regard the expiation in the case as made to divine justice, strictly speaking, or simply as including full and complete compensation for all the demands of the divine law and government, against which the sinner is in revolt. As to its nature, this satisfaction is supposed by some to involve an actual endurance by Christ of the penalty itself which the sinner has incurred, such that the sinner is discharged as though he were innocent; by others, as being simply an adequate equivalent for that penalty, such as secures all the moral results which would have been obtainable through the punishment of the sinner. In its scope, this satisfaction is in the Symbols limited in extent to the elect—to those whom the Father in the covenant of redemption has given to the Son as the fruits of his sacrifice. Yet there were members of the Assembly (Minutes, 154–8) who regarded it rather as, in the language of the Thirty-Nine Articles (XXXI), an oblation adequate as a propitiation and redemption from all the sins of the whole world.

Many of the intricate problems suggested at this point, and still others closely related to them, will present themselves for more thorough consideration in our future inquiries into the nature and aim of the Gospel viewed as a saving scheme, and into the true character of justification, regarded as that act of free grace wherein God pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous, in virtue of the satisfaction rendered to him in the mediation and the sacrifice of our great High Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for us. In the presence of such problems respecting the nature, the contents, the scope and aim of this gracious procedure, it may be well for us to bear in mind the profound remark of Butler that, as we are not judges antecedently to revelation whether a Mediator was or was

not necessary, so the Scripture hath left the matter of the sacrifice of Christ mysterious, somewhat in it unrevealed; and that we ought not to be too anxious to explain the efficacy of what he has done and suffered for us, lest we fall into the error of those who, because they could not explain it, have been for taking it away, and confining his office as Redeemer of the world to his instruction, example, and government of the church: Whereas, he adds, the doctrine of the Gospel is, not only that Christ taught the efficacy of repentance, but that he rendered it of the efficacy of which it is by what he did and suffered for us, obtaining for us through such action and suffering the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life.

Nor is it surprising that many thoughtful minds, perplexed by the various theories and explanations current respecting the mediation of Christ, are disposed to rest simply in the essential fact, as set forth in Scripture, however great may be the mystery involved. They build their faith on the revealed truth that this mediation, prophetic and priestly and kingly, is adequate and sufficient—in a word, is satisfactory. To analyse that word, (satis facere) enough has been done by our great Mediator to make salvation not only possible but sure, to all who believe in him and his grace. Enough has been done to meet every demand of justice either in God the Father, or in the Godhead generally, or in the incarnate Son, who could neither do nor suffer anything to be undertaken, even to save the world, which was not consistent with absolute equity. Enough has been done, (it may not be unprofitable to suggest) to appease the sentiment of justice in man also, since the sinner could not accept a salvation, though one were offered him, which did not conform at every point to his internal sense of righteousness. Enough has been done to sustain the dignity and sovereignty of the divine law, even while sinners on the ground of this mediation are freely forgiven for all their offenses;—enough to compensate for all the injury wrought through sin, and to restore and establish forever the moral order and harmony which sin has impaired;—enough also to protect every interest of moral government, and to sustain God in his administration over the moral universe, even though a world of rebels against that goverment are granted amnesty and full restoration to the privileges which their sin had forfeited. Enough has been done also to express in fullest form and glory the divine compassion for our fallen race, and to exhibit to the wondering universe the amazing grace, that can stoop to save even by so costly a process a creature such as sinful and corrupted man. *Enough has been done:* So God has

declared in his holy Word and though we may never comprehend why or how this was done as it was, we may with the learned and profound Bishop of Durham, rest with absolute peace in the blessed, the sublime, the saving fact.

Postponing the further consideration of the subject until we come to consider in detail the plan and the process of salvation, we may now turn to contemplate briefly the remaining function, the kingly office, which Christ also fills as our Mediator. In the Shorter Catechism it is said, (26) that he executes the office of a king, *in subduing us unto himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.* The Larger Catechism (45) adds, that as king he calleth out of the world a people unto himself, and *gives them offices, laws and customs by which he visibly governs them;* and also that he powerfully orders all things for their good and his own glory, and takes vengeance on all who reject his authority and obey not his Gospel. Other things are suggested in the definition, such as the bestowment of all needful grace, the rewarding of obedience, correction in case of sin, and royal support under all temptation and suffering. Additional phrases, defining this kingship at various points, such as instruction by the authoritative Word and Spirit, and intercession at the throne of justice, and the final judging of men, are added in the chapter in the Confession: and in the chapters that follow, we may find many illustrative statements which show how conclusively and how practically the doctrine that our Mediator is also our king in virtue of his mediatorship, was held and affirmed by the Assembly.

13. Christ as King: development of the doctrine: biblical warrant.

It was natural that this sole kingship of our Lord should have become at once both a theoretical and an intensely practical truth, in the conviction of the Reformers generally. Oppressed as they had been by the power of the Roman hierarchy, and restrained and embarrassed as they often were by the claims of civil rulers within the sphere not merely of ecclesiastical organization, but of spiritual belief and worship also, they were spontaneously inclined to turn away to Him whom holy Scripture describes as king of kings and lord of lords, as their supreme and ultimate authority alike in faith and in practice. Zwingli in Switzerland and Luther in Germany, and the divines of Holland and of the British Isles, thus became alike strenuous in insisting upon the headship of Christ within his church in contrast with all hierarchal authorities, and upon his absolute sovereignty in the religious

sphere above all the asserted rights of kings or princes, even in cases when these potentates were at heart friendly to the new faith. In his Dedication of the Institutes to his Most Christian Majesty, Francis, Calvin speaks with great emphasis of Christ whom the Father hath constituted King that he may have dominion from sea to sea . . . and that he may rule in such a manner that the whole earth, with its strength of iron and with its splendor of gold and silver, smitten by the rod of his mouth, may be broken to pieces before him. Romanism had affirmed the right of the church to rule over the civil state, even assuming that no monarch or emperor could properly exercise civil sway without churchly benediction. Protestantism made no such claim, but rather resisted the opposite claim of the state to interfere in church affairs. It was agreed in holding that, although the state is obligated to grant secular support and civil protection to the church, Christ himself is the sole and only ruler and lord within the household of faith. It is true that, when the Anabaptist faction in Germany undertook to carry the doctrine of the headship of Christ so far as to refuse to pay taxes or to bear arms in the defense of the state, Luther and his successors condemned the claim, and denounced Anabaptism as an erroneous departure from the normal doctrine of Protestantism. It is also true that the Reformation was constantly impeded and damaged both on the continent and in Britain by the problem—unsolved in Europe even in our time—respecting the true and proper relationship between the Christian Church and the Christian State. This problem will come up for special examination at a later stage in these studies.

But we have only to examine the Scotch Confession, and to read the illustrative history of movements civil and religious in Scotland during the period preceding the Assembly, to see how absolutely the conception of the kingship of Christ had embedded itself in the Scottish mind. In Art. XI of that Confession, which treats of the Ascension, it is said that our Lord has received all power in heaven and in earth, and sits forever at the right hand of the Father, inaugurate in his kingdome. In Articles XVI. and XVIII. which treat of the Kirk and of the notes by which the Trew Kirk is decernit, this royal place and service are assigned to Christ alone, as the only mediator and the only head of the church. And if in Article XXIV, which treats of the Civil Magistracy, more than this is granted to state authorities in the way of jurisdiction in church affairs, the subsequent struggles of Scotch Presbyterianism for the crown rights of King Jesus have made ample amends for the apparent inconsistency in the old Confession.

The Second Confession of A. D. 1580, and the Solemn League and Covenant, 1581, are historic illustrations of this fact. It was natural that the Thirty-Nine Articles, framed as they were by the instruction and under the supervision of the English crown, should say nothing specially on this point, beyond the recognition (XXXIV) of common or civil authority as empowered to sustain the traditions and ceremonies of the church against open assailants. But the Westminster Assembly was convened at a period when the headship of Christ as king over his organized people was in special peril, and when it was indispensable to assert in its Symbols that He who is our prophet and priest, is also the divine and everlasting king of saints. The intense struggle gradually developed between the Assembly and the Parliament, as described in the Minutes (434–6), and in English history, graphically illustrates this statement. In the introduction and the earlier portions of the Form of Government also, as they appear not in the amended American but in the original form, this doctrine is presented with great cogency, and in language drawn directly from the Bible. A grander declaration of the supreme kingship of our Lord, both in heaven and on earth, eternal in origin, glorious in administration and everlasting in results, can hardly be found elsewhere in religious literature.

All this is fully justified by the plain teaching of Holy Scripture. It had been foretold even in the Pentateuch that he who should bruise the head of the serpent, should be the Shiloh, Prince of Peace, unto whom the gathering of the nations should finally be. Four of the Psalms, recognized as distinctively Messianic, combine to set forth in glowing terms the glory of Christ as king over humanity, and the sweep and majesty of his kingdom. In the prophetical writings we discern again and again that strange blending of imperial worth and dignity with tragic humiliation and suffering, which was such an enigma to the devout Hebrew, but which has become so clear to us in the light of the New Testament story. Our Lord himself on more than one occasion, and especially in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and his trial before Pilate, asserted his own regal authority, and demanded human recognition as the true king of men. In the apostolic letters it is hard to say whether the priestly or the kingly function is most prominent in the delineations of his mediatorial work. And when we turn to the Apocalypse and there behold him as he appeared to John on Patmos, and appears again and again as the central figure in the series of visions which make up the substance of that remarkable prophecy, we are led to prostrate ourselves at his feet,

and with the redeemed and the angelic host to recognize and revere him as indeed King of Kings and Lord of Lords forevermore.

This kingship of Christ, in which his mediatorship may be said to culminate, may profitably be contemplated in two antithetic aspects, the earthly and the heavenly. The Symbols direct our attention chiefly to the former, probably for the historic reason just noted. Turning first to the earthly aspect, we may note that the kingdom of Christ in this world is primarily and mainly a kingdom within the heart of his disciples,—a kingdom which, in apostolic phrase, is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. His chief rule is a rule within the soul and life of the believer: there he is absolute lawgiver, sovereign, judge. No one truly embraces him and his salvation who does not in the full sense accept him as king, no less truly than as priest or prophet. In every genuine disciple, his will becomes the supreme rule and law,—as supreme as the will of God is in heaven itself. *Thy will be done*, in us and in all men, on earth as in heaven, is the universal prayer and purpose of his saints.

14. Nature of this Kingship: its earthly and heavenly aspects.

Out of this kingship in the believing soul, emerges his kingship within the earthly church. Here the Confession is specially emphatic. In chapter XXV, which treats of the Church, it is said that *the church visible is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ*, and the claim of the papacy to assume and exercise jurisdiction in his name and stead is declared to be *antichrist*. In chapter XXX, on Church Censures, it is said that, being thus the king and head of the church, Christ *hath appointed a government therein*, distinct from the civil magistrate; and in the next chapter, which treats of Synods and Councils, it is said that such official bodies may properly exercise *the power which Christ hath given them* for edification, and none other; and all such synods and councils are warned that their decisions must ever be *consonant with the Word of God*, and are in no case to be regarded as constituting a rule of faith, but rather simply as a help to faith. The same doctrine appears in the Larger Catechism (53–4, and elsewhere), and in the Form of Government, Ch. II, where the headship of Christ in his church is made the sole basis of its authority, and of its right to exercise discipline. This headship is said to carry with it the right to judge of doctrine, to define duty, to prescribe procedure,—in a word to do all that a person may do whose sovereignty is just, holy, unquestionable, continuous, supreme.

Nor is it within the earthly church alone that Christ exercises

such royal prerogatives. In conjunction with the Father he is unquestionably the Lord of providence also, ordering all things in nature and in human life in the interest of his people and his kingdom. As his earthly miracles show, he was and is supreme ruler over the physical world, subordinating it at every point to his own dominating will. He has also inherent right to rule in human society as well as in the individual soul, and to regulate all the diversified and often conflicting affairs of society according to the principles of his holy religion. He has the authority intrinsically to dictate laws to human governments, to regulate their policies in the interest of justice and charity, to rebuke all wicked or mischievous schemes within the state, and to bring all states, nations, empires, as well as individual men under his most holy sway. His visible church may not indeed attempt to enforce his claims at any of these points by physical methods, or by processes that are revolutionary of existing conditions in society. His sacred empire asks for no armed intervention, no partisan movements, no anarchistic devices to sustain it. His sway in human affairs is to be secured by spiritual processes only, as his Gospel is to be spread abroad in the earth by spiritual agencies alone. Yet he rules supremely among men, and must rule more and more, because he is what he is by both nature and appointment, King of all kings and Lord of all lords in human life.

The heavenly side of this divine kingship begins to appear just at the point where the estate of humiliation and the estate of exaltation, hereafter to be considered, are distinguished. The victory over death, the resurrection from the tomb, the glorious ascension, the triumphal entry into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, the intercessory function there, and the regal regulation from that heavenly throne of all affairs pertaining to his earthly kingdom,—these are the crowning evidences that he who is our Mediator, is king as well as prophet and priest in that comprehensive mediation. Of all that characterizes the royal experience and activity of Christ in heaven, no sacred writer has ever been inspired to speak: what Paul saw when he was caught up into that glorious sphere, only sealed his lips in silence. What the redeemed know of it as they share in the benignities of his blessed sway, we may learn only when we shall join with them in casting our crowns before him. But we know and are assured that he is still ruling from heaven in his earthly church, prescribing for it laws and constitutions, subduing his and its enemies, and directing all human affairs with reference to its millennial triumphs.

At this point we may close our survey of the three functions or offices exercised by Christ as the theanthropic Mediator. How vital each of these functions is in its bearings on the great problem of reconciliation, we may in part discern, though no human thought can possibly comprehend their indispensableness or their worth. How sublime that comprehensive mediation is which is represented substantially in them, but which is secondarily described in the Bible by much other imagery of almost equal significance, it is still less possible for any human mind to appreciate, in all its transcendent elements and relations. In the light of these propitiatory and salvatory functions, the one and only Mediator between Deity and our sinful race rises thus before us, as he appeared before the inspired apostle on Patmos, the Alpha and Omega of Christianity, the beginning and ending of all spiritual life and hope. We turn spontaneously from the office and its sacred functions, from all these delineations of what he did and suffered, and is still accomplishing for our reconciliation, to behold the Person himself as disclosed in the inspired Scriptures, and to find in what he is the assurance of our real and everlasting salvation through his atoning grace: we bow before him as our prophet, our priest and king, our one and only mediator, advocate, surety, intercessor, who was dead but is alive forevermore.

15. The Two Estates: Humiliation of Christ; its various features.

The doctrine of the two antithetic *estates* of Christ in the discharge of his mediatorial office, the estates of humiliation and exaltation respectively, does not appear formally in the Confession, but is elaborately defined in the two Catechisms, as a kind of recapitulation of his theanthropic work and experience. The terms, *humiliation* and *exaltation*, appear in many of the earlier creeds, and the facts which they are designed to describe, are found substantially in the Confession, as indeed they are discernible everywhere in Protestant symbolism. But the grouping of these facts under the head of *estates*—settled and prolonged conditions or modes of existence—is peculiar to the Catechisms, and is worthy to be carefully noted. It may be that such grouping was suggested by the marked antithesis in the conditions of the Savior, as described in the earliest Christian creed, or possibly by that inspired delineation, the most formal and extended confession in the New Testament: He who was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

As we have already seen, the humiliation of the Mediator began

with the kenosis—with his consenting to assume and wear our human nature, and his actual entrance at Bethlehem on a real human life. This was not a beginning of existence, but was a voluntary passing from an antecedent estate of glory and blessedness which he had with the Father eternally, to an inferior mode of existence, involving we know not what measures of limitation in his divine prerogatives—what degree of loving abnegation. The Shorter Catechism simply says of it, (27) that the humiliation consisted *in his being born, and that in a humble condition.* The Larger Catechism (47) expands the statement by affirming that in his conception and birth he consented to become the son of man, *made of a woman of low estate*, and born of her, *with divers circumstances of more than ordinary abasement.* We have already noted, in considering the significance of the incarnation, the difficult problems involved in this kenosis or emptying or abasement of himself. It is needful here only to note again the serious error involved in the supposition that our Lord surrendered his divine mode of existence for a human mode, or that he abandoned his divine attributes in becoming a man, or that he voluntarily reduced himself to a state of dormancy, in which he was unconscious of his divine nature and qualities. Whatever may have been the character or extent of his depotentiation or his renunciation of the right to exercise deific powers, we cannot but adore the divine condescension involved in such a process, and the divine love that prompted it, though the transaction itself transcends immeasurably all the boundaries of human thought,—ever recognizing in that mysterious process in all its phases a truly single, truly conscious, truly self-consistent person, God as well as man throughout.

The Larger Catechism (48) describes not only the humiliation undergone in the conception and birth, but also that prolonged humiliation which was experienced by Christ throughout his life, and which found its culmination in the sacrifice on Calvary. He submitted to the authority of the law and perfectly fulfilled its demands: he suffered the indignities of the world; he endured the infirmities of the flesh and the temptations of Satan, and completed all in the death on the cross. The humiliation undergone in that death is also described, (49) as including the betrayal by Judas, the abandonment by the disciples, the scornful rejection by the Jewish people, the trial before Pilate, the torments inflicted by his persecutors, and *the painful, shameful and cursed death of the cross.* There are some expressions in the description, such as *conflict with the terrors of death, and with the powers of*

darkness and the endurance of *the weight of divine wrath*, which, like some corresponding expressions in the Confession such as, *most grievous torments immediately in his soul*, must be interpreted with great care, lest in our use of them we dim the intrinsic glory of the theanthropic Person who for our sake consented thus to suffer and even to die. Lightfoot in his Journal reports the discussion on the last phrase, and the Minutes record his dissent from it. As first introduced by the Assembly in its revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the phrase stood, most grievous torments in his soul *from God*,—a still more questionable, if not erroneous proposition. In some of the earlier creeds such language is employed to such an extent, and with such intensity, as to lead us to surmise that what we see on the cross is not our Mediator in the totality of his priestly work and sacrifice, but a man and a man only. The Scotch Conf. (IX), while affirming with other formularies that Christ suffered the wrath of his Father, protects itself by adding that he remained the only well-beloved and blessed Son of his Father even in the midst of his anguish and torment, which he suffered in body and soul to make full satisfaction for the sins of the people.

The Larger Catechism (51) proceeds still further to describe the humiliation of our Lord after death, in his burial, and his continuing in the state of the dead, and *under the power of death for a time*,—a phrase by which the Westminster divines happily interpreted the ancient and perplexing expression, He descended into hell. Where the spirit of our Lord was during that period, or how he was occupied, has never been revealed. Did he actually go into the world of the lost, there to suffer for a time, as some have fancied, the tortures of the condemned; or, as others have held, to show himself there to Satan as after all a victor over his machinations; or, as still others have surmised, to preach the Gospel there, and thus to establish an economy of grace and redemption in the intermediate life for those who perished in the flood, or for other specific classes, or for all who in all ages may have died without hearing of his redemption? Did he go into heaven, as still others have thought, bearing the dying thief with him into paradise, and there announcing to the heavenly host his victory over death, and heralding his appointed coming to his celestial home in glory? Did that divine spirit remain in stately silence in the tomb, in holy anticipation waiting for the hour of its reunion with the lacerated body which for a brief season it was still to inhabit on earth? All that we truly know is that both body and spirit remained in the condition into which the tragic

death had introduced them, and in that sense remained *under the power of death*, until the glad moment of the resurrection arrived. Neither the Catechisms nor the Confession attempt to determine the speculative controversies respecting the Descensus ad Inferos, which for centuries have occupied so largely the attention of Protestant Christendom. The Formula of Concord recognizes the mystery of the expression, and advises caution, as Luther himself had done, in any use made of it. The Tridentine Catechism expresses the faith of the Church of Rome in the statement that Christ went into the Limbus Patrum where the Hebrew saints were congregated, in order to give them deliverance. The orthodox Confession of the Greek Church (XLIX) impressively says: Thou, O Christ, as to thy body wert in the sepulcher, as to thy soul wert as God among the dead; Thou wert in Paradise with the thief, and likewise on the throne of glory with the Father and the Spirit, since thou fillest all things, but art circumscribed by none.*

16. Estate of Exaltation: Ascension, enthronement, intercession and judgeship.

Happily there is much less occasion for question respecting the antithetic estate of exaltation; which according to the Shorter Catechism (28), included the resurrection, the ascension, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father and the judgment of men, particular and final. The Larger Catechism (51–55) introduces in addition a variety of specific features or elements, in some cases biblical, in others speculative or theological. As to the resurrection, it is averred that the body of our Lord suffered no corruption in death, inasmuch as it was not in the power of death to affect that sacred organism. It is affirmed that he rose with *the very same body with which he suffered*, with all the essential properties thereof, but without mortality

*In the occasional quotations introduced from the representative symbols of Greek Christianity, such as the Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Oriental Church (Mogilas) and the Longer Catechism of the Russian church, the fact has not been forgotten that the Eastern church in its various branches is, as it has been strikingly characterized, only a mummy of Christianity in a praying posture. But these largely petrified communions still adhere tenaciously to the accepted creeds of ancient Christianity, spurn all conceptions of development or progress in doctrine, condemn Romanism and Protestantism alike as heretical and sectarian, and declare that the Church of Christ as represented in oriental Christianity is the only repository and guardian of the mysteries of grace and the only authoritative interpreter of the truth of God. The Synod of Jerusalem, 1672, which closely approaches the Council of Trent in confessional importance, affirms (Art. II) that the Holy Scriptures must be interpreted not by private judgment but in accordance with the tradition of the Catholic Church, which cannot err or deceive or be deceived, and is of equal authority with the Scriptures.

and without the common infirmities belonging to sinful man. It is alleged that this body was truly united to his soul again, and that Christ rose in this composite form *by his own power* on the third day,—thus declaring himself to be the Son of God as well as Son of man, and by this victory over death manifesting himself to be *the true Lord of quick and dead.* And it is comprehensively added, that all this he did *as a public person*, the head of his church, for their justification, their quickening in grace, and their support against enemies, and to *assure them of their resurrection from the dead at the last day.*

Similar details are given as to the ascension and enthronement, and to the two heavenly and continuous functions of intercession and judgment. It is said that, having in our nature and as our head triumphed over all our enemies, Christ *visibly went up into the highest heavens*, there to receive gifts for men, to raise up our affections hither, and to prepare *a place for us where himself is and shall continue* till his second coming at the end of the world. It is said that in this sublime condition he is not only endowed with all fullness of joy, glory and power over all things so that he can defend his church and subdue its enemies, but also is enabled to furnish gifts and graces for his ministers and people, and to *make continual intercession* in their behalf. It is noticeable that the Catechism sets forth this intercession, not so much as a part of the priestly function, as is done in most later theology, but rather as one feature or function of his royal estate—the intercession of a prince. The nature and efficacy of this princely intercession are described (55) in the loftiest terms. The ground of it is stated to be the merit of his obedience and sacrifice upon earth as applicable to all believers; in it as a function he answers all accusations against them in the tribunal of justice, and procures for them peace of conscience notwithstanding their daily failings; through it they are said to have access with boldness to the throne of grace, and to find acceptance in person and service before God.

Christ is also represented in various places in the Symbols as the proper and only judge of men according to their individual characters and lives. In the chapter under special examination (VIII), he is said to be not only heir of all things but *judge of the world*,—of both the righteous and the wicked; and in chapter XXXII, it is declared that this particular judgment occurs at death, and is therefore a continuous function consequent upon the work of mediation. More frequently and fully he is represented as the final *judge of quick and dead* at his second coming, which is to occur at the end of time. It is said (87) that the bodies of

the wicked are then to be raised up in dishonor *by him as an offended judge;* that angels as well as men (88) shall share in that final adjudication; and (89) that upon clear evidence and *full conviction of their own consciences*, they shall receive from him *the fearful but just sentence of condemnation.* He is (90) appointed judge of the righteous as well as the wicked; and being *openly acknowledged and acquitted by him*, they shall share with him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall by his grace and authority enjoy an eternity of holiness and of bliss.

This vision of the Mediator thus exalted and glorified in heaven, and vested with such transcendent offices there in the interest of his Church, is one in which the creeds are essentially agreed, though with variations in form and in fullness of statement. Thus the Augsburg Conf. (III) sets forth specifically the death and burial, the rising and ascension, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, the heavenly dominion over all creatures for the benefit of his people, and the final judgment. While the Formula of Concord comments (IX) on the Descensus ad Inferos as representing a sublime yet mysterious fact, respecting which we are not to inquire too curiously in this life, but are rather to wait for the revelations of the life to come, it affirms with emphasis the triumphant ascension of the Mediator into heaven, his glory there, and his final judgment at the end of the world. Zwingli in his Articles declares that Christ is not only the supreme priest and unique mediator, but also the only availing intercessor in heaven for the saints. The first Helvetic Conf. (XI) speaks in eloquent terms of him as *victor duxque ac pontifex vere summus*, our mediator and intercessor and Lord, living forever at the right hand of the Father as the source of all blessing to his people. Similar statements, more or less complete, may be found in other continental symbols,—some of them, as the Belgic, specially emphasizing the kingly advocacy and intercession of Christ, as in contrast with the Roman dogma of priestly intervention and propitiation before God. The Scotch Conf. devotes three Articles to the death and sepulture, the resurrection and the ascension respectively, emphasizing in the last the celestial advocacy and the final judgment and eternal triumph of the Redeemer. And the Thirty-Nine Articles tersely affirm (III–IV), not only that he died and descended into the place of departed spirits, but that he rose again with flesh, bones and all things appertaining to the perfection of human nature; wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all men at the last day.

At this point we may fitly close our study of this remarkable

chapter, with the cognate teachings found elsewhere in the Symbols respecting Christ as our one and only and perfect Mediator. Much more, covering his redemptive work, will present itself for earnest consideration as we turn to contemplate the great plan of salvation for which his mediation provides the sufficient and sublime basis, the processes of grace involved in that plan, and the precious outcome of this mediation in spiritual experience and life. But we shall do well to carry with us throughout all our further studies in the Symbols a devout sense of the regulative and illumining presence of this theanthropic Person on whose offices and functions we have been meditating, and without whose gracious and vicarious intervention there could be no salvation for our fallen race. In all such studies, we shall assuredly fail unless we walk continuously in the light, and are guided by the tender hand of Christ the Mediator. For herein lies the grandest peculiarity of Christianity as distinguished from all the natural faiths of the world,—that it rests fundamentally, not on ceremonies or dogmas, nor on professions or organizations, but on just such a Person as Jesus Christ is seen to be in his salvatory mediatorship,—not on myths or traditions respecting him, but on the historically verified facts concerning his incarnation, mission, teaching, suffering, death and resurrection, as at once the anointed prophet and priest and king of mankind. Whatever of value there may be or may not be in the current suggestions of a Christocentric theology, as distinct from other modes of constructing theologic systems, there can be no question as to the actual concentration in Scripture of everything else in the form of doctrine, around the person of this divine Mediator, as being at once the ordained center, the illuminating principle, the organizing life of the entire Revelation.

17. Final summary: mysteries involved: faith requisite.

In concluding this survey, we may well bear in memory the fact that there is ever a solemnizing and subduing mystery of godliness, as Paul describes it, enveloping this conception of Him who was thus God manifest in the flesh for human redemption. We cannot measure the heights and depths of the kenosis, the grounds and reasons of the incarnation, the combination of the divine personality with the human nature, the strange blending of divine energies and capabilities with the limitations common to mankind, and the other insoluble mysteries which at least in this life must envelop him who was at one and the same time God and man. Nor can we at all estimate at its true value any one of his sublime offices, or know with any adequate degree of fullness what

he was and is and will continue to be as the prophet, priest, king and judge of mankind. Least of all can we follow him into his transcendent place at the right hand of the Father, or estimate adequately the multiplied ways in which, though ascended corporeally into heaven, he is still enlightening, empowering, guiding and ruling his church and people on the earth, and ordering all things in the majestic sweep of his providence for good to them that love him. These enveloping mysteries no finite hand can push aside—no mortal eye can penetrate. Yet they are proper and inevitable concomitants of just such a gracious disclosure as the Mediator came to make,—of just such a work as he came to do in and for our lost world; and the heart of faith can only bow down in their presence and adore.

It is a memorable fact that as early as A. D. 1555, an English congregation or church was organized at Geneva, composed chiefly of persons who had been driven out from Britain by the persecutions under Queen Mary; and that John Knox who in the previous year had been prosecuting his studies in Geneva, under the personal direction of Calvin, was one of its associate pastors. He had received an urgent call from a similar congregation of exiles at Frankfort, and at the commandment of Mr. Calvin, that notable servant of God, as he says, he had entered on his work as their minister. But he soon returned to Geneva, and remained there from A. D. 1555 to 1559, when he went back to Scotland and began his grand work in Britain as a reformer. One among the most interesting minor creeds of the period is the short and simple Confession, adopted by this Genevan congregation, and afterwards received and approved by the Church of Scotland, doubtless through the influence of Knox. We may well appropriate to ourselves in closing this Lecture, the substance of that venerated symbol. The second and main Article in it is a declaration of belief in Jesus Christ, the only Savior and Messias, the only Son of God, who took on him the shape of a servant and became man in all things like unto us, sin excepted, to assure us of mercy and forgiveness, . . . who, giving us by grace that which was his by nature, made us through faith the children of God, . . . who of his free mercy, without compulsion, offered up himself as the only sacrifice to purge the sins of all the world, . . . and who, because he would accomplish all things and take possession for us in his kingdom, ascended into heaven to enlarge that kingdom by the abundant power of his Spirit, by whom we are most assured of his continual intercession toward God the Father for us; . . . yet is he present with us as his members even unto the end of the world.

LECTURE SEVENTH—THE PLAN OF SALVATION.

SALVATION DEFINED: THE DIVINE PLAN: COVENANT OF REDEMPTION: COVENANT OF GRACE: THE GOSPEL: ELECTION: REPROBATION.

C. F. CH. VII: III, v–vii: L. C. 12–13, 30–35; S. C. 16–20.

While the supreme purpose of the creeds of the Reformation was to set forth the redemptive work of Christ the Mediator, in contrast with the doctrinal errors and sacerdotal superstitions of Rome, it was natural that they should commence, as they generally did, with an exposition of the Mediator himself in his constitution, his qualities inherent and official, and his distinctive functions or offices as exercised in that redemptive work. The first answer in the Heidelberg Catechism, setting forth the faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, as the only comfort of the soul in life and in death, illustrates the general tendency of spiritual Protestantism, first to describe and extol Him who saves, and then in the light that shines from his person to describe and magnify his great salvation. So the Second Helvetic Confession, the most technical and theological among the continental symbols, brings in the strong chapter (XI), De Jesu Christo . . . Unico mundi Salvatore, before it discusses the great Evangel, with all its blessed experiences and results. And though the Westminster Confession prefaces its remarkable presentation of the Mediator divine and human, with the chapter (VII) on God's Covenant with Man, it still postpones the full development of the truths which that title represents until, as we have seen, it portrays before our delighted eyes the Immanuel himself, who represents God in every covenantal relation, and through whose vicarious intervention God and man are graciously reconciled. A truly spiritual and quickening theology must always follow this order, since the work of the Mediator can be comprehended only in the illuminating instructiveness of his Person, and since it is the Person on whom our faith must really be fixed—the Person in whose hand our hands must be clasped, before we can comprehend or enjoy experimentally the salvatory work which he has wrought out for us and for mankind.

Following the order quite generally preferred in Protestant

symbolism, we may now pass from the contemplation of Christ as the one and only Mediator and Savior of men, to examine more specifically the glorious scheme of salvation which he came into our world to bring,—considering it with respect to its need and nature, its formation and historic development, its embodiment in the Gospel, its adaptation and efficacy in the case of all who truly accept its gracious provisions, and its effect on those who willfully reject them. Much that is included in this broad and central section of Christian doctrine, has already come before us more or less fully in the consideration of man especially as sinful and fallen, and of the Savior in his mission and his offices as the anointed Mediator between God and sinful man. But in contemplating salvation itself as a divine plan for the deliverance of mankind from the corruption and guilt of sin, it will be needful to study with reverent care every essential element in this plan, and to comprehend so far as we may the principles and the methods and provisions incorporated in it. In a word, we now turn to the contemplation of the Gospel—that Gospel of deliverance from both the guilt and the power of sin, which Christ came among men to introduce and proclaim.

1. Salvation defined: its need and nature.

It is incumbent here at the outset to note with utmost thoughtfulness the human need of salvation, and of just such a plan of salvation as that which Christianity sets forth as the only hope of our fallen race. Channing has happily defined salvation on its subjective side as a rescue from moral evil, from error and sin, from the diseases of the mind, and a restoration to inward truth, piety and virtue. But that eminent representative of humanitarianism sadly failed to recognize the objective element in the term, as including not only such spiritual restoration, such recovery from the disease of sin, but also deliverance from the guilt and the condemnation consequent upon sin, and reconciliation with God through appropriate mediation, together with eternal felicity secured through the divine forgiveness, and based on personal holiness divinely wrought within the soul. The true biblical salvation in this composite form has its synonym in the scriptural term, redemption, which is also a composite term, involving not only inward release from the fetters of sin, but legal ransom and judicial restoration to divine favor through the vicarious intervention of Christ. Both terms, each in its subjective and its objective signification combined, are essential to the full description of that great salvatory procedure proclaimed in Scripture, of which the propitiatory mediation is the

ground, and whose result is the complete and eternal reconciliation and union of the redeemed soul with God.

The radical contrast between this redemptive process and all other modes of reconciliation proposed or conceivable by man, will be more readily apprehended after the essential elements in this process shall have been considered. It is important here simply to emphasize the necessity for just such a scheme of both inward purification and objective justification as has just been described. That necessity has already been made apparent in the exposition of the biblical doctrine of mediation. That significant term presupposes, as we have seen, a spiritual alienation induced by sin, whereby man has become separated from God, and is living in a condition of both orphanage and legal condemnation. It presupposes also the withdrawal of God personally and judicially from the soul that has thus become estranged and rebellious, and the providential giving over of that soul for the time to the evils which its sinfulness inevitably induces. Fellowship and communion, parental regard and favor on one side, filial love and obedience on the other, become impossible under such moral conditions. And so long as the sinner thus persists in his sinfulness, so long must he continue to wander farther and farther in act and temper from God, and so long must God continue to withdraw himself, and leave the sinner more and more to the misery and doom consequent upon his rebellion. These fundamental facts are indeed affirmed with utmost solemnity in Scripture, but they do not exist because the Scripture affirms them. They find their attestation immediately, as Butler has so forcibly shown, in the consciousness of every soul which has in any degree discerned the character and claims of God, or which properly apprehends itself in its relations to God. The history of the race, the experiences of men in all lands and times, attest them. They are certified by the testimonies of the profoundest ethical philosophy, as well as by universal experience and observation. The Bible describes the dark reality in all its palpable and awful forms, but the reality could not justly be questioned, were there no Divine Word to certify to it. Man knows himself a sinner, perverse and alienated, and also knows that a radical disparity in character, and consequently a moral and legal chasm, stretches itself out between him and God because he is a sinner.

Nor is the witness of Scripture needful to convince us of the peril, the hopelessness, of such a condition, apart from divine grace. Whenever we faithfully study ourselves, taking full account alike of the moral forces and the moral disabilities existing

within us, and attempt the experiment of restoring ourselves by the action of our native capacities to what we may regard as an acceptable spiritual state before God, we are at once convinced of the practical impossibility of such restoration. The difficulty is spontaneously seen to be too extensive and too serious to be reached through personal resolution or reform or any kindred procedure, originating in and carried forward by ourselves. Some other agency than our own evidently must be brought into play for our complete and lasting recovery. And on the side of God also we intuitively perceive that, however much we might imagine ourselves able to do in this direction, we could have no assurance whatever that God would regard such effort as satisfactory, or would be reconciled to us on account of what we had thus done or endeavored to do in the way of restoring ourselves to his favor. And back of all this, we must further realize the demand of offended justice, the claims of violated law, and the guilt and condemnation consequent on such violation; and confess that the probability of restoration and reconciliation on any natural basis is wholly unwarranted. Nor is the peril, the hopelessness, of the case limited to the present life only; for natural theology alone is sufficient, in what it reveals as to the constitutional development of character in man and to the relation of character to destiny, to lead to the conclusion that this sad condition, unless divinely corrected, will be everlasting. Neither here nor in eternity could the sinful and estranged soul hope by any personal process to secure reconciliation with God.

It is needful here to affirm this profound necessity afresh, because it furnishes the only adequate basis for the conception of a divine plan of salvation from the pollution and the condemnation of sin. That necessity is indeed included in what has been already ascertained concerning the moral nature and condition and needs of man, and also in what has been said respecting the person and offices of Christ the Mediator. Yet this spiritual need cannot be too often or earnestly emphasized, not simply as a truth affirmed in Scripture, but as a fundamental fact written on the constitution and verified in the experience of the race. The more profound our apprehension of this need,—the more clear and strong our convictions respecting the desperate condition into which sin has thus reduced mankind, the more distinct and comprehensive and effective will be our estimate of the salvation which Christ came to our earth to confer. Hence the peculiar stress laid upon this necessity, internal and external, in the Protestant creeds, both Lutheran and Reformed. Socinianism with its Pelagian conception of human

nature might assert the possibility, or even the actuality, of the restoration of the human soul to holiness, and therefore to renewed fellowship with God, through the exercise of its own inherent energies and aspirations. Roman Catholicism might with a certain degree of consistency affirm that such restoration is obtainable through the intervention of the church — through the mediation of the priest and the sacrifice. But Protestantism, with its larger conception of what spiritual holiness is, and its deeper view of what sin is as both a corrupting and an estranging influence, must maintain that the case of humanity is hopeless, unless God himself shall, as the Scriptures declare, bridge the chasm through vicarious mediation, and bring the sinner back to an estate of reconciliation, by bringing him back in penitence and love through Christ to himself. On this fundamental proposition the Protestant Symbols earlier and later are alike unequivocally based; without this foundation the Protestant theory of salvation must be pronounced an illusion.

2. Plan of Salvation defined: This Plan eternal, sovereign, gracious.

The familiar phrase, Plan of Salvation, current in nearly all evangelical schools of thought, is employed to describe somewhat more specifically the divine purpose to provide a redemptive scheme which should adequately meet at every point this universal necessity, and should actually save all who would accept its provisions, not only from guilt and condemnation but also from the inward corruption of their sins, and bring them graciously into a state of blessed reconciliation with God. The general doctrine respecting the decree or decrees of God already considered obviously carried with it as one essential part the conception of such a particular decree of salvation,—an eternal purpose which, while it included on the one side the permission of sin, also included on the other an adequate provision for human deliverance from sin, and a determination to secure such deliverance. We have seen in what sense and measure it was purposed that sin should exist as a moral experience. In like manner was it designed even from eternity, that man should be saved from the sin into which he had thus been permitted to fall. Such a purpose, in a word, was as truly an element in the universal decree as the creation of the world, or the divine administration over the material or the moral universe.

Nor is it proper to regard this as an inferior or secondary feature of that generic scheme whereby, in the language of the chapter on Decrees, God from all eternity, according to the counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordained *whatsoever comes*

to pass. It is noticeable that in that strong chapter the Westminster divines pass on almost immediately from the conception of this generic purpose controlling all things alike, to the specific matter of salvation, and affirm therein not only that *God from all eternity has chosen to save* some portion of the human race, but also that eternally he has *foreordained and provided all the means thereunto.* It is obvious from the form of their statement, that they contemplated human salvation as in fact the greatest work of God —greater than creation, or providential or moral administration; and therefore placed it in the very foreground of their doctrinal system as the grandest illustration of that comprehensive scheme of things, which they sought to describe under the title of the Eternal Decree. In this respect, as in so many others, they simply carried out in more elaborate form what was embedded substantially even in the earlier Lutheran, and still more fully in the main Calvinistic symbols. Thus the Formula of Concord, in describing the foreordination of those who are saved, says: This predestination or election extends only to the good and beloved children of God and is the cause of their salvation, for it procures their salvation, and appoints those things which pertain to it. The Catechism of Heidelberg, the Second Helvetic, and some other continental creeds, incorporate the truth in forms still more definite and complete. In the Canons of Dort the divine predestination, as involved in the conception of the plan of salvation, is put into the front as Primum Doctrinae Caput, and this gracious plan or purpose is elaborately described, in accordance with the high Calvinism of Holland, as the supreme act of Deity. And in the Thirty-Nine Articles (XVII) predestination to life is said to be the result of the everlasting purpose of God whereby . . . he has constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation.

It is important further to note that this divine plan, thus formed from eternity, was in a true and absolute sense sovereign. We cannot conceive of such a scheme as demanded of right by those whom it includes in its holy circle, or as conditioned in any way upon their consent or election. Like the purpose to create, it was formed antecedently to all time, and above and beyond all conditions which any creature could interpose. The formation of such a plan was an absolutely free procedure, independent of all extraneous claims or interpositions. God, in other words, was as far beyond and above all coercing causes in devising this gracious scheme, as

he was in the creation of the world or of man. When we shall come to consider the application of this scheme in the actual deliverance and restoration of individual sinners, we shall be enabled to see where and how and in what measure the will of man becomes in some subordinate sense a conditioning factor. But nothing that will come to light in that connection, can affect the primal fact that God was absolutely free in planning, as he is also free in bestowing, the salvation provided in the Gospel. Sovereignty, wise, holy, gracious, supreme, sheds its own golden radiance on both the purpose and the execution.

And as this plan was eternal in its origin and sovereign in its formation, so it was perfect throughout, not only as an expression of all the inherent attributes of Deity, but specifically as a manifestation of the divine love for our race, contemplated as fallen. It was no arbitrary scheme, springing from the autonomy of an absolute will simply: every divine perfection shared in its formation. But most of all is it comforting to regard this plan as the supreme utterance or manifestation of pure, holy, inextinguishable love. It has indeed sometimes been represented in a colder, more chilling light,—as if the sovereignty illustrated in it was the edict of a monarch, inscrutable in its design, inexplicable in its disposition and method. The language of the Confession is regarded as in some degree open to such an imputation. But a wise and just theology will rather recognize this plan as at the beginning conceived in love, and as executed under the inspirations of a love which shrank from no toil or sacrifice requisite to secure the desired reconciliation. We shall have occasion again and again, as we progress in our studies, to recognize this fundamental fact; but it is important at the very outset of such investigation to emphasize as fundamental the truth, that this plan of salvation, while eternal and sovereign, was also at the beginning, as it is in all its gracious unfoldings, a plan of love.

3. Covenant of Redemption: phrase defined; errors to be avoided.

Another phrase, current in Calvinistic theology, though not found in the Symbols or indeed in any conspicuous Protestant formulary, requires brief explanation at this point—the Covenant of Redemption. The Confession speaks of two covenants only, the covenant of works under which Adam was placed, and through whose violation he fell, and the covenant of grace established between God in Christ and the believer. But the federal theology seemed to require, in order to its structural completeness, the additional conception of a covenant between the persons in the blessed Trinity, antecedent

to both of the preceding, and formed even from eternity, as the primordial basis on which the entire dealing of God with man in the interest of salvation might rest. This conception did not indeed make its way into the Symbols, yet the fact which the phrase is designed to describe, is clearly suggested in the confessional chapter on Christ the Mediator, wherein it is said that the Son accepted the office to which he was called by the Father, was appointed and endowed for this office by the Father, and by discharging the duties involved in the office secured, as if by contract, salvation for sinful man and heavenly rewards for himself. A half century later, the dogma of a separate covenant of redemption, as anteceding in time the covenants of works and of grace, became more prominent in the federal theology, especially under the influence of such divines as the younger Turretin. It has since then retained its place in Calvinistic theology, and appears, though less conspicuously, in our own time as an illustrative mode of setting forth the very practical truth, that not the Son only, but the Father also, was concerned even from eternity in that gracious plan or scheme whereby through their joint activity men are saved. There is also some warrant in Scripture (Ps. 2; 110; and Isa. 53) for the presentation of this vital truth under the form or image of a covenant, in which these divine Persons are contemplated as making an agreement one with another, giving mutual promises, prescribing and accepting conditions, specifying obligations, as is done in human contracts. And although from the nature of the case such a divine contract lies entirely beyond our comprehension, and though the biblical representations respecting it are but slight and largely anthropomorphic, it may still be accepted under proper limitations as helpful in the effort to apprehend the interest and the gracious purpose of the entire Deity in the scheme and process of salvation.

Yet there are two errors respecting this covenant against which we are to be guarded. The first is the serious error of attempting to analyse this divine transaction too closely,—to specify too elaborately what each of the parties was to do or suffer under this contract, and especially to separate these parties so broadly through such analysis and specialization, as to convey the impression that they are two divine Beings, rather than two hypostases or subsistences within the one holy Godhead. Detailed descriptions of what the Father agrees to do, and what the Son agrees to do,—of the promises and pledges made on either side, of the rewards guaranteed by the Father on condition that the Son shall faithfully perform his assigned part under this contract, are certainly without

proper measure of warrant in the Bible, and are liable to lead those who follow such analysis too closely into a pernicious form of tritheism. Such attributing to this celestial transaction the technicalties of a human compact, is not only unsustained by Scripture, but is fraught with spiritual peril. A really painful illustration of this error may be seen in the Sum of Saving Knowledge (Head II) where this covenant is described as a bargain between God the Father and God the Son, with specialized gifts, promises, stipulations, conditions, pledges, perquisites on the one side and the other,—the whole becoming a legal or commercial contract, transacted as between two wholly independent parties.

It is another equally serious error to represent the Father and the Son as the only parties contracting in this divine covenant. The Spirit, whose relations to the actual salvation of men are certainly not to be regarded as inferior to those of the first and the second persons in the Trinity, is rarely if ever recognized as a distinct party in this divine transaction. Thus, Hodge, (Theol. II:359) describes the covenant of redemption as a compact between the Father and the Son only; and Shedd, (II:360) affirms that the contracting parties here are the first and second persons of the Trinity; the first of whom, as he says, promises a kingdom, a glory and a reward, upon condition that the second performs a work of atonement and redemption. Yet surely the office and work of the Spirit are no less a part of the great plan of salvation than those of either Father or Son, and there appears no adequate reason why this covenant should not include him as truly as either of them. If there were terms, promises, conditions, pledges, distribution of functions and offices, specific rewards in the case, certainly the Spirit must have been, not merely a passive spectator of such agreement, but an actual sharer in it, covenanting to do his part also, his equally essential part, in the sublime work in whose furtherance the whole Deity is generally represented in Scripture as engaged. Any other view is inconsistent with the universal doctrine of Christendom that these three persons, being alike God, are equal in power and glory, and that notwithstanding all economic division of personalities, they are and forever remain one Being. Nor does the procession of the Spirit from the Father, or from Father and Son, imply any such inferiority in his relation to this sublime work, as would justify us in excluding him from participation in this primal covenant. In the purpose and work of human salvation, as in their nature these Three are One,—one Being whom no theology ought ever so to separate or analyse as to suggest tritheism in whatever form.

Comprehensively viewed, the two phrases, plan of salvation and covenant of redemption, represent not two independent transactions, but antithetic parts of one and the same transaction wherein God, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, formed the purpose to save fallen man, devised the process and method of salvation, provided on every side the divine aids requisite, and as in holy covenant entered each upon his appointed share and division of that supreme work. And it adds immeasurably to our sense of the significance and preciousness of these phrases, if we suffer them thus to carry us back of our personal birth, back of the incarnation, back of the first Messianic promise, back of the creation of the earth and man, back of all recorded time, to that august eternity in which the Godhead dwelt alone; and if they shall enable us to discern even in that eternity the blessed Trinity meditating upon the condition of our sinful race yet to be, and in holy union and infinite grace devising that scheme of deliverance whose development in time, specifically in the incarnation and mediatorship of Jesus Christ, is the wonder of wonders in human history, as it will be the song of the redeemed and of angels in glory forever.

4. Covenant of Grace: the necessity of gracious interposition.

It is important to recall at this point what has been said in a previous Lecture respecting the covenant of life or of works—styled in the Irish Articles, the covenant of the Law—which stands out in the Symbols (Ch. VII) in vivid contrast with the covenant of grace or of the Gospel, now to be considered as an element in the plan of salvation. Mitchell has conclusively shown (Hist. West. Assembly) that the theology of the covenants, though it received its fullest elaboration in Holland, had been known and to some considerable extent accepted in Britain, prior to the convening of the Westminster Assembly. Besides other evidences, he adduces the remarkable Treatise of the Covenant of Grace by Ball, published during the sessions of the Assembly, with commendatory notices from several of its members, in which the whole subject is elaborately discussed. It is an additional fact, interesting to us, that almost simultaneously with this there appeared from the pen of John Cotton in New England a similar volume, entitled a Treatise of the Covenant of Grace as it is dispensed to the Elect Church effectually unto Salvation. In the volume of Ball the covenant of works or of life is defined as a mutual contract or agreement betwixt God and man, wherein God promiseth all good things, especially eternal happiness, unto man upon just, equal and favorable conditions, and man doth promise to walk before God in all

acceptable, free, willing obedience, expecting all good from God and all happiness in God. The covenant of grace is defined in like manner as that free and gracious promise which God of his mere mercy made in Jesus Christ with man, a miserable and wretched sinner, promising unto him pardon of sin and eternal happiness, if he will return from his iniquities, embrace mercy reached forth by faith unfeigned, and walk before God in sincere, faithful and joyous obedience. Ball proceeds to describe minutely the historic evolution of the latter covenant, from its first revelation to Adam down through the patriarchial period and the Mosaic and Hebraic eras, until it attained its final development in the new covenant or testament, made with sinners through Christ as the appointed Mediator in the economy of grace.

This historic reference helps to explain the distinct place which the Covenant Theology secured for itself in the Symbols. Both of the covenants, as defined by Ball, are incorporated in them. As we have seen, it is declared in the Confession (VII : i) that, in order to bring himself more fully into human consciousness, and to grant mankind a larger *fruition of himself as their true blessedness and reward*, God was pleased to establish between our first parents and himself a form of covenant—a more familiar and winning type of relationship, which should induce in them a livelier faith and hope, and should stimulate them to higher, nobler obedience. Having already considered this original covenant as to its purpose and nature, in connection with the story of the temptation and the fall, it is needful here only to emphasize the fact of the divine tenderness and care for man manifested in such condescension as is here described. The statement was introduced at this point doubtless to guard against a possible impression that the command to refrain from eating the forbidden fruit, and the permission of temptation to assail man even in Satanic form, exhibit God in cold sovereignty rather than in paternal love, determining that man should be seduced and should fall from his uprighteousness. Hence it is said that God was pleased in his infinite holiness to express, not his sovereignty, but his tender regard for man in this special form of covenant,—a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience. There is certainly no warrant in the Scriptures for any other view than that, so far as the divine desire was concerned, such *fruition of God* as the supreme blessedness and reward of our first parents, was the end sought in and through this covenant, which is therefore fitly styled in the Catechisms *a covenant of life* as well as of works.

The following sections of the same chapter (VII) describe the failure of man to avail himself of the privileges offered to him in that covenant, and declare that after this failure and in consequence of it, God was pleased to make with man a second covenant—the covenant of grace. The suggestion of such a covenant appears in the Irish Articles (21, 30), in contrast with the covenant of the law, and in the Canons of Dort (Second Head, Art. VII), where it is styled the new covenant; but is not found distinctively in the creeds of the sixteenth century. In the Symbols it is definitely described not only in the Confession, but in both Catechisms; tersely in the Shorter (20) but quite elaborately (30–36) in the Larger, which not only incorporates but expands the theological concept of the Confession. The occasion of this gracious covenant appears in what is said in chapter VI. with regard to the condition into which the fall plunged man, the loss of original righteousness and of filial communion with God, the defilement of all the faculties and parts of soul and body, the death in sin, and the forfeiture of all the blessings which a career of holy obedience would have secured. In the order both of thought and of time, the covenant of grace must have followed, as is said, upon the failure of the covenant of life. Though the plan of salvation by this process was eternal as a purpose in the divine thought, its chronologic manifestation must be consequent upon the historic fact of the fall, and the justifying reason for it must appear in the awful destruction which the sin of man has brought upon him. This necessity had indeed been foreseen even from the remotest eternity, and in eternity the scheme of deliverance had been formed; but there must have been first a covenant of works, and man must have failed to live up to that covenant, and consequently have been plunged into an estate of sin, before this covenant of grace could be introduced and manifested in time.

The statement of the Larger Catechism (31) that the covenant of grace was *made with Christ as the second Adam*, and in him with all the elect as his seed—a transaction occurring, like the covenant of redemption, between the Father as representing the Deity, and the incarnate Son as representing mankind, or the elect among mankind—should be so interpreted as to harmonize with the teaching of the Symbols elsewhere. As the parties to the first covenant were God and man, so the parties to the second must be regarded as God and the believer,—the covenant being indeed mediated and secured through Christ as a surety, yet involving in order to its saving operation the consent and acceptation of the individual souls for whom Christ has thus mediated. This is the

view suggested in the Shorter Catechism and also in the Confession (VII), where the covenant of grace is represented simply as a divine offer of life and salvation through Christ, upon condition of faith and obedience on the part of the believer, coupled with a direct promise of the aid of the Holy Spirit in believing and accepting willingly this gracious offer. In the subsequent sections of the chapter where the practical administration of the covenant is described, under both the Old Testament and the New, the same representation of the human factor in the case is clearly given. Christ is indeed the procuring and meritorious cause, but the trustful and obedient assent of the human soul is, though in a different sense and sphere, a condition no less indispensable. The covenant is made with believers directly rather than indirectly, but not with them as independent of Christ, their Redeemer and surety; it is rather made with them *in him*.

Such in brief is the plan of salvation as described in this chapter and elsewhere in the Symbols: a plan formed in eternity yet in full view of the condition of man as a fallen being;—formed also in sovereignty yet in infinite love, and with just recognition of every requisite in the case on both the divine and the human side,—a plan in every feature adequate, including all that is needful either to the inward cleansing or to the judicial deliverance of all who will accept its gracious provisions. The remaining sections of the chapter bring before us in an interesting manner the story of the historic unfolding of this redemptive scheme. The fourth simply describes the biblical representation of this covenant as a testament or a will, and explains the usage by referring to the death of Christ as the testator, and to that everlasting inheritance which in dying he bequeathed to those who by faith in him and justification through him become his heirs. As the same Greek word is translated by both terms, and as the latter had some special significance in view of its use in connection with the Supper of our Lord, and also of its general use as descriptive of the older and the newer Scriptures respectively, it seemed to the Assembly important to associate the two terms together as representations under different images or aspects of one and the same gracious transaction. What is in one aspect a covenant is in another aspect a testament, and both covenant and testament are alike included in the one scheme of salvation through the one and only Mediator. In the Revision it was proposed that this section, and also two phrases occurring elsewhere in the chapter, *And is called*

5. Plan of Salvation, its historic unfolding: Types and promises realized in Christ.

the Old Testament, And is called the New Testament, be stricken out as superfluous. As they stand, they are probably misleading rather than helpful.

The fifth section describes that beautiful evolution of this scheme historically in the Old Testament, which begins with the earliest Messianic promise, and ends with the latest prediction concerning the coming Messiah. That evolution commences with the disclosure of a deliverance to come, made first to Eve in immediate conjunction with the curse pronounced on her sin, then to Noah and to Shem among his sons, afterward to Abraham (repeated to Isaac and Jacob), and finally to Judah among the sons of Jacob, in the assurance that from him the predestined Shiloh, Prince of Peace, should spring forth—the attracting Savior of all the nations. It appears again in the Mosaic ceremonial system, its priesthood and sacrifices and ordinances, fitted indeed primarily to be a religious cultus, working into the Jewish mind the principle of obedience and faith and devotion, yet intended mainly to be typical of a higher dispensation to follow, *all fore-signifying Christ to come;*—a gracious discipline, in every part sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to *instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah*. We see the same evolution in the moral, even more conspicuously than in the ceremonial law of Hebraism, as it advances from the earlier and simpler and more negative requisitions, unfolds its sacred claim along more spiritual lines, grows in the sphere of its jurisdiction and in the solemnity of its mandates, until at length it becomes a holy, supreme, perfect mode and rule of life, not for the Hebrews only, but for all mankind. We see it also in the progressive disclosures of inspired doctrine, from the more primary and fundamental truths respecting the divine existence and attributes and relations to men, onward through all the added and superadded revelations of God as the Father and Sovereign of mankind, and the consequent revelation of man to himself as disobedient, corrupt, perishing in sin without a Redeemer. We may see it remarkably manifested in that succession of prophecies which, starting from the pentateuchal germ, flowed forth in steadily increasing beauty and fruitfulness in the psalms and in the prophetical writings, ever approaching more and more nearly the perfect consummation of all in the predictions respecting the babe of Bethlehem, the Savior of mankind. How far the Westminster divines carried out this conception of a fivefold evolution of *promise, prophecy . . . and other types and ordinances*, delivered to the people of the Jews *in the time of the law*, and constituting—as they said—the old testament or

covenant, it is not easy to determine from their formularies. It certainly is remarkable that in that age they should have discerned so much of that divine method of unfolding truth and grace and that principle of evolution, which we in later times have found to be the coalescing law in all the older Scriptures, binding them into an indissoluble unity from Genesis to Malachi around the central truth of the Messiahship of Jesus.

From this conception of the divine economy as revealed in the Old Testament, they passed on in the section following to describe *Christ the substance*, of whose person and mission all that had preceded was prophetic and typical. Here they are careful to say that we are to find herein *not two covenants* differing in essence, but *one and the same under various dispensations*. They teach us that, although in the higher economy of the Gospel as realized in Christ these ceremonial and external elements in religion are fewer in number and have more simplicity and less outward glory, the plan of salvation is therein held forth in *more fullness, evidence and spiritual efficacy*, and that it is presented as such not to the Hebrews only, but to *all nations both Jews and Gentiles*. They describe the ordinances, fewer and simpler yet far more effectual, in which the new covenant was dispensed,—specifically, the preaching of the Word and the administration of the two Sacraments instituted by our Lord. And here they pronounce the sacred evolution complete and perfect for all time; affirming elsewhere that the whole counsel of God in all things needful for his own glory or for the faith, life and salvation of men are therein set forth; and that to this completed revelation nothing is at any time to be added, whether by the traditions of men or through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

A proper apprehension of the principles and methods in which this beautiful evolution, not simply of doctrine and law, but of every other essential element in the divine scheme of grace manifests itself, is indispensable to a right interpretation of either the earlier or the later Scriptures. It is conceivable that God might have unfolded at once to the Jewish people as a body, or simultaneously to all nations, his benign plan for the salvation of the race. But there are even to our narrow perception some practical reasons,—lying partly in the nature of the truths to be made known, partly in the degree of receptive capacity in men, and partly in the quality and greatness of the moral ends to be gained,—why such an unfolding should be made as it was made in fact by a more gradual process, continued through long periods of time and marked by a wide variety as well as an extensive series of specific

disclosures, until the mind of man, darkened and corrupted through sin, should be elevated to the point where it could perceive and duly appreciate the divine display of grace—the divine purpose to educate and persuade and save, as finally made known to the world in the incarnation and mediatorship of the Son of God. We are accustomed to speak of such successive disclosures as a series of dispensations, the Patriarchal, the Hebraic, the Christian, differing somewhat in their contents, their spirit, their scope. But while such chronologic distribution has for our minds a certain degree of helpfulness, it will be well for us always to remember that the divine process was continuous, steadily progressive, exhibiting all the while higher and higher elements, larger and larger manifestations of the divine purpose, until it reached its final culmination in the Messiah and the Gospel. The proper key to the Old Testament lies in the fact that it is throughout an historical record, preserving by inspiration so far as needful for the spiritual enlightenment of the race, the story of this gradual unfolding of the divine plan of redemption; and the proper key to the New Testament lies in the corresponding fact that it is an historical record, similarly preserved, of the completion and consummation of that prolonged unfolding in the Gospel of life in Christ Jesus: Oehler, Theol. of the Old Testament; Bernard, Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament.

6. The Gospel defined as a System of Truth.

Passing on from the examination of these introductory phrases and statements as they are brought before us in this chapter, we come at once upon the central and significant term, *Gospel*, in which the real substance of the chapter is chiefly contained. The term appears already at two points in the Confession; the first referring simply to the four narratives of the life of Christ as given in the canonical books of Scripture; and the second, very incidentally, at the close of the chapter on the Eternal Decree. But here the word stands out in special prominence as representing all that characterized the new economy or testament as distinguished from the old. It appears again in the impressive chapter (XIX) on the Law of God, where we are taught that Christ in the Gospel in no way dissolves but rather strengthens and emphasizes the obligation of men to obey the law, and also that true obedience to the law is not contrary to the Gospel, but rather *sweetly complies with it.* We find it again in the chapters on Worship and on the Sacraments; and in the subsequent chapter on Baptism it is said that none but a minister of the Gospel—one

duly appointed by the church to proclaim what is recognized as the Gospel—should administer that churchly sacrament. Several instances of like use may be seen in the Larger Catechism (53, 61, 72, 191) as the commission to *preach the gospel* to all nations, all that *hear the gospel* are not saved, *the gospel propagated* throughout the world; and in the Shorter Catechism (31, 86), *freely offered to us in the gospel*—a phrase appearing in the definitions of both effectual calling and saving faith. In the Sum of Saving Knowledge it is repeatedly used as a synonym for what is there styled the covenant of grace and reconciliation.

In the absence of any exact definition of the term, we are left to gather up from the general teaching of the Symbols a concrete view of its meaning in the two obvious aspects in which it is there presented; first, as a revelation of saving truth, or of the plan of salvation set forth in the Scriptures; and secondly, as a divine proclamation and offer of salvation based on that revelation:

Contemplated first as a revelation of religious and especially saving truth, the term in its most primary sense signifies (god-spel) the story of God in his being and his relations to men and claims upon them; or more specifically, (good-spell) the story of the person, messiahship and mediation of God in Christ. It is the great Evangel, as the Synod of Dort styled it,—the glad tidings told in the four evangelic narratives respecting the incarnation, activities, teachings, sufferings, death and resurrection and ascension of the Immanuel, the mediating Redeemer of men. In other words, it is the story supernaturally told and divinely authoritative respecting the plan of salvation, first conceived in eternity but fully revealed in time at the advent, and made known to men through the personality and the mediatorial ministry of Him who from eternity was the predestined prophet and priest and king of mankind. The frequent use of the term in the New Testament (nearly ninety instances) may be noted as illustrative of its meaning: in the majority of these instances it refers simply to the recorded revelation concerning Christ or concerning the way of salvation through him. Of the vast array of truth embodied in this wonderful term, it is impracticable here to speak in detail. That truth rises in its scope far above all ordinary knowledge; it transcends all human sciences or philosophies; it relates directly to what is religious in human thought and experience. Nor is it religious truth in any general or secondary aspect, but such religious truth as bears vitally upon the spiritual life in man, and concerns itself immediately with his immortal nature and

destinies. It is, in a word, such truth respecting God and man, their several characters, their vital relations, their fellowship secured through grace, as is centered in the correlated term, salvation. And it is this truth not as revealed in nature but as set forth in the inspired Scriptures, and especially in so much of these Scriptures as brings before us the one Mediator between God and man, in all that he did and suffered, all that he said and was as our Redeemer, and enables us to see in and through him how we may be saved alike from sin and from condemnation. Calvin tersely defines the Gospel as comprehending all those testimonies which God gave to the fathers concerning his mercy and paternal favor: but eminently, the proclamation of the grace exhibited in Christ.

The language of the Symbols as to the substance and doctrinal contents of this Gospel is full of interest. In the chapter specially under notice, it is said that God offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ on condition of faith in him, and promises to give his Holy Spirit to men in order to make them willing and able so to believe. In the succeeding chapter it is said that by his perfect obedience and sacrifice Christ has *purchased not only reconciliation for sinners, but also an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven;* and that for all who believe on him, he has obtained complete redemption, and has provided all spiritual help and blessing thereunto, *in such manner and ways as are most consonant with his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.* So in the subsequent chapters (X–XV) on Effectual Calling, Justification and Sanctification, Faith and Repentance, the glad tidings are described in various aspects as the manifestation of a divine scheme for the forgiveness and spiritual restoration of sinners in all these particulars, in and through what Christ has done and suffered in their behalf. In the Larger Catechism it is said (59) that this redemption is *certainly applied and effectually communicated* to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it; that (69) in virtue of his mediation, justification and adoption and sanctification are guaranteed to all believers; that by this process (70) all sins are pardoned, and the person of the sinner is accepted and counted as righteous in the sight of God; and (75) that all sinners are through Christ renewed in their whole man after the image of God, having the seeds of repentance unto life and all other saving graces implanted in them, and nourished and strengthened within them, until they become dead unto sin and are raised as from the dead into newness and freshness of spiritual life.

These expressions harmonize well with the descriptions of the

Gospel scattered through the earlier creeds. The Catechism of Luther and the Augsburg Conf. (IV–V) furnish the keynote for the whole, and the responsive note may be heard, clear and full, in the Articles of Ulrich Zwingli and in the succeeding Reformed symbols. The first Helvetic Conf. (XI–XII), speaks of the great Evangel of Jesus Christ, offering grace and benediction to men in and through him as a mediating Savior. In the Second Helvetic Conf. the Gospel is defined as that glad and happy tidings wherein, first by John Baptist, then by Christ the Lord himself, and afterwards by the Apostles and their successors is preached unto us in the world, that God hath now performed that which he hath promised from the beginning of the world, and hath sent, yea, and given unto us his only Son and in him reconciliation with the Father, remission of sins, all fullness and everlasting life. The Heidelberg Catechism (18) describes this Mediator as freely given to us for our complete redemption and righteousness, and affirms that this supreme fact becomes known to us (19) through the holy Gospel, which God himself first revealed in Paradise, afterward proclaimed by the holy patriarchs and prophets, and foreshadowed by the sacrifices and other ceremonies of the law, and finally fulfilled through his well-beloved Son. In the French Confession and in some other continental formularies, the term is used chiefly with reference to the Scriptures as containing the announcement or the promise of salvation through Christ; while in others as the Belgic and the Canons of Dort, it points immediately—as in the Symbols—to the truth itself, the spiritual and saving truth imparted in the sacred writings. The Second Scotch Confession speaks of the blessed Evangel which is received, believed and defended by many and sundry kirks and realms as God's eternal Truth, and the only ground of our salvation. And the Irish Articles in like manner say (83) that the New Testament is full of grace and truth, bringing joyful tidings unto mankind, that whatsoever formerly was promised of Christ is now fulfilled, and instead of the ancient types and ceremonies exhibiteth the things themselves, with a large and clear declaration of all the benefits of the Gospel. In general it may be said that in respect to the essential contents of the Gospel, Lutheran and Calvinist, the continental and the insular branches of Protestantism, were cordially agreed.

From these various yet concordant statements we may gain the generic proposition that the Gospel regarded as a disclosure or message is an authoritative revelation of spiritual and saving truth concerning the eternal plan of salvation realized and made known

to men; namely, that in view of the sin and the apostacy of the race God has graciously provided, in the incarnation and mediation of Christ, contemplated in its various aspects, a suitable scheme for the deliverance of sinners from their sin and from the guilt incurred by their disobedience, and for their complete justification and reconciliation through faith and obedience to himself. The end of the gracious scheme is human salvation; the agent is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the method is his mediating work; the conditions are faith in him and submission to his teaching and example; and the result is pardon, peace, holiness, and an eternal union with God through him. Whether the message be true or false, effectual or otherwise, this in a word is the Gospel —the central doctrine in the Bible, and the supreme manifestation of the Deity to fallen man.

7. The Gospel contrasted with other conceptions of salvation: its superiority and efficacy.

This definition or description of the Gospel viewed as a divine message, may be more fully estimated in its unique worth and beauty, if we contrast it for a moment with other theories respecting salvation, such as are more or less current among men. If the preliminary question be raised whether there is really any need of salvation in any form, the answer must be found in what we have already learned respecting man as a transgressor of the divine law, as deficient in cordial conformity with that law, as in a chronic state of disobedience and rebellion toward God, and as animated in the substance of his life by a deeply seated and inordinate principle of selfishness—a dominating purpose to make self rather than God supreme in all his activities. A further answer may be found in the historic fact that mankind generally, of all countries and races, have seemed to be more or less conscious of this spiritual condition, and of the necessity for some mode of deliverance from sin, and of reconciliation with their offended Creator and Sovereign. Every natural religion that has appeared in history or that now exists in the world, by its sacrifices and confessions, by its prayers, its penances, its altars and temples and priesthood, acknowledges that the present is not the normal or appropriate spiritual state of such a being as man knows himself to be, and that some way of escape from this sinful and criminal state ought if possible to be secured. Yet in fact these natural religions do not meet the profound spiritual end for which they were instituted: they neither provide the needed sense of deliverance from guilt, nor renovate the heart, nor sanctify character, nor give the worshiper the spiritual peace which

would flow from an assured consciousness of holiness attained and of reconciliation with an offended God. In a word, these natural faiths, scattered throughout the world, represented by millions of bewildered devotees, and often splendid in their material displays, have never yet given to a single soul what is embodied in the Christian concept of salvation, or is actually realized and enjoyed by every soul that truly accepts the blessing provided in Christ Jesus.

Again: it may be claimed that if man be indeed sinful in any such sense or measure as demands a radical change in his state of heart and his relation toward God, that change is to be found, not in some superhuman mediation such as Christianity presents, but in the restorative energies still resident within the human soul itself, and in the natural and providential conditions that surround it in life. Sin is affirmed to be at the worst only a slight and occasional incident in the moral experience of mankind, and one which the actor may and will correct as knowledge increases and sound judgment comes into play,—one also which God contemplates with parental indulgence, and for which in whatever aspect no salvation such as the Scriptures propose, is needful. But is it not obvious that all such conceptions rest on superficial, defective, and largely erroneous views of what sin is as a nature resident in man, and especially of the relations of sin to God, and his estimate of its guilt and condemnation? Is it not obvious also that, if the soul by some energy remaining within it should thus of itself correct its evil tendencies, the guilt of previous transgression would remain, and would require in order to divine forgiveness some expiation which the sinner could not of himself supply? But still further, is it not obvious as a matter of practical experiment that men do not restore themselves, as is suggested, to a state of obedience and holiness,—that while we see here and there happy reformations along special lines in individuals, we do not discern any such renewal in the heart and life of the race as justifies the belief that our humanity without divine intervention will ever bring itself back to an estate of holiness, or to any proper and blessed relationship with Deity? Tried by actual experiment, tested by wide observation of men, is it not obvious beyond all question that there is no adequate salvation in man himself—no such regeneration of thought, of conviction, of conduct,—no such deliverance from a condition of conscious guilt and consequent condemnation, as will secure to him what that comprehensive and profound term suggests?

It is plainly inadequate either to deny that man needs any

salvation, or to affirm that he can secure the salvation he needs through any among the natural religions, or by spiritual processes originating with and completed by himself. It is a profound remark of Bishop Butler, which is corroborated by the experience and observation of all thoughtful minds, that there seems in the nature of the case no probability that anything that man could do would alone and of itself prevent the evils which sin has brought upon the race. In fact there never has appeared anywhere in human society, even in the highest developments of civilization in the world, any clear indication that mankind in the aggregate, acting simultaneously and together, will ever be able to sweep away human sin and to restore our fallen race to a state of holiness. The only possible alternative lies, therefore, in the intervention of some divine power,—a divine power impelled by a painful sense of the actual condition of humanity, and by a merciful desire to help and save the world. To this alternative all men alike are driven, as individuals like Socrates have been driven, on the ground of philosophy alone, wherever this moral situation is apprehended exactly as it is. The case is seen to be one which only God, and the God against whom the evil has been wrought, can adequately appreciate or make suitable provision to remedy. He is the only being who can either renovate or forgive,—who can rectify the purpose, give peace to the conscience, quicken and hallow the corrupted nature and life, and establish satisfying relations with himself. Waiving just here the vital question whether God would in fact do this, after all the dishonor which human sin has brought upon him and his government, it is beyond all question that, if salvation be possible, it must come from this divine source as originant and supreme, rather than through any independent energy or effort of man. And it is also clear beyond question that in such a gracious undertaking God must bring into play, not the native powers of the soul alone, but also his own superadded potency and grace, his own thought and will and quickening touch, in order to accomplish the spiritual restoration desired. These are conclusions to which, wholly apart from what the Scriptures teach, any one must come who thoughtfully, conscientiously considers what man is spiritually, and what man needs to be in order to become truly worthy in the sight of God.

It is just here that the Christian scheme presents itself to the race as the true solution of this great and solemn problem. What the Christian scheme proposes is just such a divine intervention to save man,—an intervention in the form of gracious mediation, adapted to meet the case at every point, and actually effective in

securing, not only release from the guilt and the condemnation incurred by human sin, but also such change of heart and purpose in man as reconciles God to him and him to God peacefully, thoroughly, forever. It offers in Christ, the prophet and priest and king, divine and yet in a true sense human, sinless and complete in himself, just the personality needed to bring about such reconciliation. It offers in the Holy Spirit all the strong help needful to work the requisite changes in the spiritual constitution of man, and to bring him into a right state of affectionate and holy union with his Maker and his Sovereign and Father. And in the Scriptures it offers all the practical directions, the truths and precepts and encouragements needful to make the way of salvation plain, and to enable men to walk herein. In all these respects, Christianity presents itself to the mind and conscience of mankind as both a thoroughly reasonable scheme, and one which has in it every element of efficiency, and consequently an immeasurable wealth of blessing. Instead of being, as the natural man often fancies, a mysterious and incomprehensible matter, some strange device whose justifying basis none but God can know, this scheme is not only in itself in harmony with sound reason, but is the only scheme which a faithful philosophy of human nature can regard as at all likely to be effective in such a case as that which by general confession is actually presented to view in the character and the moral condition of the human race. If that race is ever to be saved, in the full sense of that term, reason itself after complete examination affirms that the plan revealed in the Gospel is the only plan yet devised which gives any promise whatever of meeting the case just as it stands. It is the Christ who saves: there is, there can be no other.

We may now turn to consider the wonderful Gospel thus described and justified, with respect to its practical aim and scope as a divine offer. We have already seen that the function of Christ as a prophet contemplates nothing less than the education and illumination of the entire race through his perfect instructions,—that as king he is the predestinated lord and ruler of men, bearing in his hands all power providential and gracious, and having supreme authority over all,—and that in some true sense his priestly function also, his sacrificial offering and propitiation, are designed for the whole human family. What is thus true of him as the Mediator, must by necessary consequence be true of the Gospel, so far as its inherent capabilities and adaptations are concerned. As Christ is a competent Savior for the race,

8. The Gospel as an Offer: its aim and scope.

so the salvation provided in the Gospel is the only salvation needful for the race—adequate in itself to restore all mankind to holiness, and to reconcile all mankind to God. In other words, the heavenly plan of mercy is intrinsically suited to the intellectual and spiritual needs, not of any class or nation or age, but of all men, all nations, all ages. The truths embodied in it are such as all may understand; its precepts are instinctively felt by all to be mandatory; its promises and its warnings find an instant response in the soul of man universally. The Gentile as well as the Jew may hear and believe it: the pagan as truly as the educated mind, the child as readily as the sage, may apprehend it. Such is the testimony not merely of Scripture itself, but also of nineteen centuries of actual experiment; and there appears no warrant for the anticipation that in any coming century or era the race will outgrow this divine, this trustworthy and triumphing Gospel. It is the gracious message of God to our humanity, universal, perpetual, final. Such universality in the offer is a necessary corrolary from the universality of the mediation on which the offer is based.

But we are confronted here by the oppressing fact, that at the end of nineteen centuries the large majority of the human race is as yet ignorant of this salvatory proposal. And this fact brings us face to face with the mysterious truth that, as in the preceding dispensations, so in this Christian dispensation, God has chosen to proceed in the task of human restoration, not by one instantaneous act, but rather by a prolonged historical process. The Synod of Dort reverently recognized this truth in its statement that God, after having devised the plan of salvation, sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom he will and at what time he pleaseth. The slow advance of this saving knowledge, the continuous obscuration under which so large a proportion of the race still sits as a very shadow of death, are not attributable solely to the blindness or obduracy of human nature, or to the sluggishness or sinful inefficiency of the church, whose great commission it has been and is to disciple all the nations. As God first chose individual men such as the patriarchs, and afterwards the elect race of Israel, to be the recipients and custodians of his grace and truth for a time, leaving the rest of humanity under the shadow of sin and guilt, though from the first contemplating the whole race in his loving purpose, so he has chosen that his announcement of a salvation provided, should not be made known to all mankind in one cosmic flash of revelation, but rather should be diffused through providential and human agencies from one section of the globe to other sections, from the continent and the country where he first

sounded it forth to other countries and continents, until in time it should become known throughout the whole earth. He has never suffered the gracious message to be lost, even amid such moral darkness as enveloped the Middle Ages, or to be corrupted or impaired through the vain philosophies and false faiths and superstitions of men. On the contrary, without hasting and without resting, he has carried on the process of progressive disclosure, utilizing the languages and activities and civilizations of men as the vehicles of the gracious transmission, until already a large proportion of mankind has come to know, at least in outline, what his scheme of salvation is. Standing as we do somewhere near the center rather than the close of this historic evolution, we are unable to comprehend this divine process in its strange complexity, or to explain all the mysterious and painful delays in that evolution. Yet we know enough even at this stage in its unfolding, not only to be assured that the Gospel is not a failure as a saving scheme, but also to justify the belief and the hope that it shall yet be heard and appreciated throughout the world.

We are also confronted here by the still more painful fact, that this divine announcement is misunderstood, despised, rejected by multitudes of those to whom the gracious message has in fact come. The doctrine of the Symbols as to the perversity of the natural heart, the deadness of the soul in sin, the spiritual inability to receive and the willful disposition to reject not only the authority but also the offered grace of God, has already been sufficiently estimated. Yet we are startled to find that the divine plan of salvation is apparently so largely thwarted, frustrated, by the perverse will, the moral blindness and obliquity, of those whom the Gospel has actually reached. And, painfully slow as the movements of providence in the case seem to be, it is more painful still to see the progress of this saving scheme so strangely arrested by the wicked choice and resistance of the very race whom it was designed to reach and save. While the bells of grace sound out the free and willing offer, the ears of the people, as Esaias is quoted by our Lord himself as saying, are dull of hearing, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. Nor are there wanting inspired declarations which would almost seem to imply that God is willing to have it so,—consenting for the time to a perverse hardening of the heart which his Spirit might apparently correct and renew. The dark fact is very strongly stated in the Confession, in the affirmation (V: vi) that God not only *withholdeth his grace* whereby sinners might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts, but even

withdraweth *the gifts that they had* . . . and gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan; *whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves*, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.

Still nothing either in the slow processes of providence or in the unsuccessful struggles of the Gospel with individual sinners, should impair our faith in the cosmic adaptations of this divine scheme, or in its ultimate diffusion everywhere as a proclamation of God addressed to our race without exception. That proclamation is intrinsically worthy of universal credence: its truths, its spirit, its methods alike commend themselves to the universal reason, even while the heart of man is in rebellion against them. The message of grace is a message to the universal conscience, and the Messenger who stands at the door of the soul and knocks, is seen and felt to be worthy even by those who most obdurately resist his invitation. The inviting voice of the evangelic prophet Isaiah and of the forerunner, John Baptist, are but fitting preludes to the comprehensive invitation of the Savior himself to the poor, the heavy laden everywhere—to every one that thirsteth for deliverance from sin and guilt, in whatever land or age. And the Master, himself its luminous and divine center, commands his church to preach this everlasting Gospel to every creature, in the assured belief that, rightly presented, it will prove its divine efficiency in discipling all the nations, and in saving through Him all men who hear and believe the tender proclamation. It is important to emphasize this truth just at this stage, before we come to consider the practical application of this saving scheme, especially at the point where the universality of design and application comes into contact with the divine method of elective grace. It may be noted here that as Christ is said to be a Mediator sufficient in his several offices to meet the needs of the entire race, yet is efficient in his actual mediation only in the case of those who accept him in that relation, so his Gospel, while sufficient as a divine plan to meet the spiritual necessities of the whole world of mankind, is yet efficient in the actual salvation only of those who cordially comply with its just provisions.

9. Later conceptions of the Gospel: Improvements noted.

This generic conception of the Gospel as a disclosure of the divine plan of salvation and as a gracious announcement and offer of salvation, universal in nature and wide as the race in its adaptation and purpose, is now extensively recognized as in substantial harmony with the narrower, stricter doctrine taught in the Symbols, and indeed in

the Reformed symbolism generally. There is little doubt that the divines of Westminster followed Calvin and his theologic successors closely, in regarding the Gospel as a scheme which from first to last contemplated the elect only. They thought of the race as divided into the two widely distinct classes, the elect and the condemned—those on whom God would bestow mercy, and those on whom he would inflict justice. They viewed Christ as acting in his mediatorial capacity for the former class exclusively, and as sustaining no relationship whatever, except as final judge, to the latter class. They regarded the divine plan of mercy as devised and executed in the interest only of those whom God had from eternity selected to enjoy its beneficent provisions. They therefore contemplated the divine proclamation as addressed only to the elect, and interpreted the inspired declaration that God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son for its redemption, as referring restrictively to the world of the elect. In a word, they were particularistic rather than comprehensive in their apprehension, not only of the application of the plan of grace, but also of the plan itself as to its aim and its adaptation.

Yet it is manifest from the recorded debates (Minutes, 152–158) that there were those in the Assembly who interpreted the inspired declaration in its broader sense as including the entire world of humanity. Calamy was not alone in holding that there is a double revelation of divine love, special and general, and that the general love of God includes even the reprobate, and involves as the fruit of it a general offer and general grace and the possibility of general reformation. Others, such as Arrowsmith and Marshall, held that the gracious offer is to be proclaimed to all men alike, not merely because its ministers do not know who the elect are, but on the broader ground that this offer is in some true sense divinely made to all mankind, so far at least as the Gospel has become known. There can be, said Marshall, no *falsum subesse* in this gracious proposal. It is an unquestionable fact that in our own day there has been in Calvinistic circles a gradual broadening of view at this point, which has led many to recognize more distinctly the universal as well as the particularistic aspects of the plan of salvation,— the Gospel being regarded not only as a message addressed to the elect, but as an announcement that may properly be made to all mankind alike, on the basis of a divine provision adequate and adapted to the salvation of the entire race. Thus, the Declaratory Act of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, (adopted in 1879) affirms that the love of God to all mankind, his gift of his Son to be the propitiation for the sins of

the whole world, and the free offer of salvation to men without distinction on the ground of the perfect sacrifice (mediation) of Christ, are matters which have been and continue to be regarded by this Church as vital in the system of Gospel truth. The Free Church has in like manner declared officially (1892), that the revelation of grace, springing from the love of the triune Deity, is made to all mankind as sinful, and therefore all who hear it are both warranted and required to believe to the saving of their souls. The recent Articles of the English Presbyterian Synod, (1890) affirm in like manner that God was moved by his great love to man to hold forth a promise of redemption,—that he desires all men to be saved, and freely offers to all men forgiveness and eternal life in Christ,—and that he has commissioned his church to preach unto all nations this Gospel of his grace. A still more marked illustration appears in the chapter, *Of the Gospel*, recently proposed in our own communion as a part of the revision or emendation of the Confession of Faith, in the following terms:

I. God, having provided in the covenant of grace, through the mediation and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, a way of life and salvation sufficient for and adapted to the whole lost race of man, doth freely offer this salvation to all men in the Gospel.

II. In the Gospel God declares his love for the world, and his desire that all men should be saved; reveals fully and clearly the only way of salvation; promises eternal life to all who truly repent and believe in Christ; invites and commands all to embrace the offered mercy; and by his Spirit accompanying the Word pleads with men to accept his gracious invitation.

III. It is the duty and privilege of every one who hears the Gospel immediately to accept its merciful provisions; and they who continue in impenitence and unbelief, incur aggravated guilt and perish by their own fault.

IV. Since there is no other way of salvation than that revealed in the Gospel, and since in the divinely established and ordinary method of grace, faith cometh by hearing the Word of God, Christ hath commissioned his Church to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations. All believers are, therefore, under obligation to sustain the ordinances of religion where they are already established, and to contribute by their prayers, gifts and personal efforts to the extension of the kingdom of Christ throughout the whole earth.

In this carefully defined statement, the ultimate source of the Gospel is said to be the love of God for the world of mankind, and

his gracious desire that all men should be saved from their sinfulness and their guilt. A covenant of grace to this end is said to be devised through the mediation and sacrifice of Christ, our Lord and Redeemer. Under this covenant a way of salvation, sufficient for and adapted to the necessities of the entire race, is not only provided for, but fully and clearly revealed and offered to all men alike. And this divine way of life is one which all alike are invited and commanded to embrace as offered,—the offer being seconded by abundant promises of mercy to all who truly repent of sin and believe in this salvatory scheme, and also most tenderly enforced by the Divine Spirit accompanying and illuminating the gracious message. As a whole, the statement must be regarded as a careful, just, safe, thoroughly biblical presentation of the great Evangel in which our Christianity finds both its meaning and its glory.

The third and fourth sections of this statement are important additions, as especially setting forth the duties of all men in view of such an offered Gospel,—the duty of every hearer on one hand, and of all who have believed the message, including the whole Church of Christ, on the other. It is declared to be obligatory upon all who are made acquainted with this plan of salvation, to accept at once its merciful provisions. In the presence of this divine announcement it is no longer permissible for any sinner either to deny his need of salvation or to look for salvation elsewhere, whether among the natural faiths of the world, or in the nostrums of human speculation. He is placed under immediate and imperative obligation to embrace the opportunity thus divinely presented: no claim of personal righteousness, no apology for sin, no excuses for delay are admissible. If the sinner refuses to accept the gracious provision, that refusal is his own voluntary and wicked act, in defiance of all divine influence and persuasion, and it must therefore not only involve him in grosser impenitence, in darker unbelief henceforth, but also bring upon him by his own fault a more condign and dreadful condemnation. Such is the comprehensive teaching of the New Testament, and on the basis of that teaching it may safely be affirmed that this Gospel thus presented becomes to all those who reject it a savor, not of life, but of death unto death.

The consequent duty of all believers, and of the Church, is also emphasized here. It is said that there is no other way of salvation than that thus set forth, and that the race must know and accept this gracious scheme, or perish in its sin. It is declared that this Gospel, viewed as a message, must be explained and

commended to the world by those who have already proved the message to be infinitely worthy of belief; and that it is the divine purpose that this plan of mercy should be made known, not by supernatural agencies only, or by the immediate inspiration of each and all alike, but through the combined labor and sacrifice of believers, divinely commissioned to bear the glad tidings to every land and to all people. Hence every believer is bound to maintain the church as an institution, and the ordinances established under the Gospel, not only because these are essential to his own spiritual life, but also because the church thus divinely ordained, and thus sustained by the adherence and the prayers and gifts of all believers, is the appointed agency and instrument for the enlightening and salvation of mankind. And this duty will remain, these practical obligations survive in full force, until the kingdom of Christ shall actually be extended throughout the whole earth,—until the great scheme of grace shall have wrought out its predestined purpose in the restoration and redemption of the race.

As has already been intimated, there is in these statements a distinct advance beyond the conception of the mission of Christianity incorporated in the Symbols, and in the other creeds of primitive Protestantism. This advance does not involve the denial or rejection of the more limited or particularistic doctrine of salvation found in these creeds, but simply affirms a broader, wider application of the great principles recognized in them. It is not in collision at any essential point with the Calvinistic doctrine of particular and unconditional election, but involves only a freer and wider conception of such election as the experience not of a small proportion but of vast multitudes of mankind, and a comprehensive belief that in the elective purpose of God the race as salvable may be viewed as in some deep sense included. The churches of the Reformation, continental and insular alike, were not prepared to grasp so cosmic a doctrine of grace, nor indeed were their successors in the seventeenth or even the eighteenth century lifted up to such a level of thought and of conviction respecting the vast possibilities of the divine plan. But it certainly involves no departure from any vital tenet of Calvinism, to hold this broader and clearer view of the Gospel as, in the language of the suggested Revision, presenting a way of life and salvation sufficient for and adapted to the whole lost race of man. Such an addition to the Confession would not only have given authoritative expression to the truth as widely held and taught within the Presbyterian communion, but would have furnished a

decisive answer to some of the most pungent and injurious criticisms made upon its teaching and its spiritual mission.

10. Plan of Salvation applied: Election defined: Election in providence, in grace.

Keeping in mind the Plan of Salvation divinely devised and provided for our sinful race through the mediation of Jesus Christ; and also this general conception of the Gospel, viewed as a revelation of spiritual and saving truth fitted to the needs of such a race, and as a tender announcement and offer of salvation addressed to all, and in itself available and sufficient for all mankind, we may now turn to consider the specific application of this gracious scheme in the case of those who are savingly reached thereby. Here arises again the speculative question already discussed in part, whether God in his sovereignty first chose or elected the persons who are actually reached and saved by this scheme, and then devised the scheme, and made it known for their benefit; or whether in the series of wise, free and holy acts, into which the eternal decree is according to the Larger Catechism resolved in time, the scheme or plan was first, and the election of the individuals to be benefited thereby subsequent. It is true that most of those who adhere to the teachings of Calvin, place the personal election first, and regard the devising of the plan for the saving of these elect persons as a subsequent decree. This was obviously the view of the sublapsarian as well as the supralapsarian section of the Assembly. Two thoughts are urged especially in justification of this view; first, that it seems to make the sovereignty of God in redemption appear more glorious, since such an election or predestination of certain persons from all eternity must be an absolutely unconditioned act on his part; and secondly, because it seems to draw a spiritual line more broad and profound between the persons thus foreordained unto salvation before time was, and the remainder of mankind. It is also urged that Peter and, especially, Paul lay peculiar stress on such predestination unto life even from eternity, not merely as a ground of comfort to the believer, or of warning to those who reject the Gospel, but also as the key which opens to our view more clearly the entire plan of providence and of grace toward mankind.

Yet it has justly been questioned whether any essential advantage is secured by such a presentation of the divine purposes, and also whether something of value is not lost or forfeited by that mode of statement, in its relations especially to the divine offer as universal. It is indeed in some deep sense forever true, that the

election to salvation through the Gospel is an event not only known to God eternally, but also eternally determined upon in his mind. But is it not also just as true, that God must have had in mind from the beginning the plan by which these persons, after their lapse into sin, were to be restored to holiness and to himself; and that when he chose them to be saved, he at the same time chose them to be saved in that way, and that only, which he had eternally devised and provided for their spiritual restoration? As he must have determined to create, before he could determine to permit the fall with its consequent sin to occur, and as he must have provided a Mediator before there could be any actual mediation exercised or enjoyed, is it not obvious that he must also have devised a scheme whereby such mediation should become effectual in time, before he selected the individual souls that should be reached and saved through the mediatorial procedure? There is probably as much ground for such a conception, as for the antithetic conception which is more commonly cherished in stricter Calvinistic circles. The sovereignty of God is certainly as manifest and as glorious under the one presentation as under the other: in either case man can present no plea in character which shall constrain God to confer salvation, or in any way condition or control the grace that provides the way of recovery from sin and its doom. On the other hand, such a conception of the divine determinations as is here suggested seems to be more in harmony with the doctrine just discussed respecting Christ as the prophet for humanity, the priest and sacrifice for humanity, and the king for humanity,—in each and every office our one and only, our adequate and efficient Savior, toward whom God in the Gospel invites the whole lost race of man to turn and look and live. Whether the Assembly, in the presence of the rising and somewhat arrogant Arminianism of their day, would as a body have admitted such a modification of their general position, it is quite sure that some members, such as Calamy and Marshall, would have found no serious difficulty in such admission. And though Calvinists of the stricter school may regard such modification as inconsistent with the logical completeness of the doctrinal system enunciated by their great leader, yet surely one may prefer such an arrangement of the divine determinations without forfeiting his claim to be a disciple of Calvin, so long as he holds to an election which is particular as well as generic, and which is unconditioned by any act or merit in man.

The fact of such an election particular and unconditioned is to be affirmed, not merely on the ground that it is an essential element

in a properly balanced Calvinism, but far more on the ground that it is a fact clearly taught and justified by holy Scripture, and abundantly verified in human experience. It is also affirmed generally in Protestant symbolism, though not always with exact and technical meaning. The Augsburg Confession contains no Article on the subject: but the Formula of Concord introduces such an Article on the ground that the doctrine, as it alleges, brings great consolation to pious minds if it be rightly expounded. It specifically describes this election (XI), as extending to all the good and beloved children of God, procuring their salvation and appointing those things that pertain to it. The Second Helv. Conf. (X) tersely defines election in the statement that God hath from eternity predestinated or chosen freely and out of his grace, and with no regard or respect for men, the holy whom he wishes to save in Christ. The Belgic Conf. (XVI) declares that God in his mercy delivers and preserves from perdition all whom he in his eternal and unchangeable counsel, out of simple goodness, hath elected and chosen in Christ Jesus, without any respect to their works. A definition closely resembling this in both substance and phraseology appears in the first Canon of the Synod of Dort. And the Thirty-Nine Articles, (XVII) define predestination to life as the everlasting purpose of God whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation. While varying in fullness of phraseology, the Protestant formularies are essentially agreed in defining election, (with its synonyms in such terms as predestination and foreordination) as the divine purpose to save a certain proportion of mankind through the provision made in the Gospel, and an actual choice or selection of the persons on whom the blessing of salvation should in this way be conferred. Edwards in his treatise on the Decrees, states the doctrine in its most positive and even startling form, in the noted proposition that God decrees all the good that ever comes to pass; that there certainly will come to pass no more good than he has absolutely decreed to cause; and that certainly and infallibly no more will believe, no more be godly, and no more be saved, than God has decreed that he will cause to believe, and cause to be godly, and will save.

Waiving for the moment all questions, speculative or practical, that may spring up in the contemplation of the fact thus described, we may at the outset recognize the fact itself as unquestionable. And it is helpful just at this point to note, that election in the

domain of grace is not some unique or singular transaction of Deity, having no parallel or analogue in any other sphere of divine determination or activity. A certain process of sovereign election, of the same nature substantially, as Butler has conclusively shown, is an obvious fact in divine providence and in the general history of mankind. While the immeasurable varieties in talent and attainment, in condition, and possessions, in geographic location and position in life, seen among men, are referable in part to their personal qualities or those of their ancestry, still much the larger proportion of these differences has obviously been determined by the hand and wisdom of God. While some of them may be explicable through the agency of natural and moral qualities acting in a species of independence, yet over and above all we may distinctly see a divine determination which is supreme and sovereign in such bestowment. To deny that the hand of God is manifested in such distribution of providential blessing,— to refer the vast result either to the operation of merely inanimate laws or forces within the sphere of nature alone, or to the will and abilities of man only, would be simple atheism. No really deep philosophy can consent thus to exclude God from the broad domain of what we fitly term Providence. We discern this type of election in the case of nations and races, distributed here and there through the earth, with multiplex diversities in almost every element of life; each receiving the largest part of all that it holds or enjoys, directly through the medium of a providential purpose and disposing. We discern it no less clearly in the case of individual men, who are what they are and have what they have because God provided for them even before their birth, and because he makes them specific objects of his sovereign care day by day, even while they are wholly unconscious of such dependence on his electing providence. Nor is the fact of such providential election ever seriously questioned by men, excepting where their selfishness leads them to be envious of those who possess larger talents or have larger possessions or privileges than themselves, or where their unfilial unwillingness to surrender their lives to the divine control, incites them to murmur at the disciplinary dealings of God in providence, or to rebel against the thought of his absolute sovereignty over them.

To one who has duly weighed this fact of election, as manifested everywhere in the general scheme of providence, it cannot seem strange or unreasonable that some corresponding election should manifest itself in the special scheme of grace. Viewed generically, such gracious election is a fact equally obvious and equally

commanding. That God chose the Hebrew race among the many races or nations of men, not merely to inhabit the promised land, but to be the recipients of his revealed truth, the privileged possessors for the time of his promised salvation, the example and the leader of surrounding tribes and peoples, is a fact which even secular history abundantly illustrates, and without which the Old Testament narratives become an inexplicable mystery. That in like manner he chose individual men and particular families, as the patriarchs and their households, and the great leaders and prophetic teachers of his chosen people, and endowed them severally with spiritual gifts as well as with adequate opportunities, in connection with his unfolding scheme of grace, is also a truth which it is impossible to gainsay. The Old Testament is in fact a continuous record of such divine elections, national, tribal, domestic, personal; and of the results, temporal and spiritual, consequent upon such elections.

Still more signal illustrations of this divine choice and determination within the religious sphere may be found in the New Testament, as in the calling of the apostles and their enduement for their holy office, and in the planting and training of the church, and the selection of those who were to be its teachers inwardly, and its commissioned messengers outwardly, proclaiming in its name the sublime Evangel to the world. Nor has the fact of such election and enduement, such supernatural preparation and commissioning, been any less obvious or commanding as a fact in the various periods of church history from the apostolic century down to our own times. He who reads that history in all its remarkable developments, or who studies the current unfolding of events in the interest of the Gospel, without discerning, far above the purposes of men, the movements of parties or the play of human agents and forces, the sovereign choice of God, supremely ascendant over all, reads to very little purpose. Nor can it be said that this divine choice is at any point generic simply, contemplating men in mass or in classes; facts abundantly manifest the presence of such superintending choice as well in the individual life, just as the divine wisdom and skill appear as distinctly in each particular plant, each individual insect, as in the creation of worlds, or the ordering of planetary systems. Neither can it be said that such divine choice is controlled or conditioned by the desires or determinations of men, even where these appear to be working in holy conjunction with the divine will, since such human activities are in the nature of things always subordinate and dependent on the sovereignty that sways alike the general

and the particular—the whole race of man and the humblest member of that race, in their common relations to the great plan of salvation.

Had evangelical Protestantism been content to rest in the generic fact thus defined and illustrated,—had it been willing to accept as sufficient for practical use the simple definition of Wesley, that election means a divine appointment of some men to eternal happiness—a statement nearly equivalent to the confessional phrase, *appointed the elect unto glory*,—or the mediate proposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles, just quoted, not only would a vast amount of speculative, sometimes acrimonious, discussion have been avoided, but the practical value of the doctrine as a highly spiritualizing if not saving element in religious experience, would have been vastly enhanced. There can be little doubt in the mind of any careful observer, that theoretic diversity on the secondary points involved, and dogmatic discussion around these points, have wrought incalculable injury to the doctrine itself as one among the priceless truths of spiritual Christianity. And one of the most vital problems for the thoughtful student, and for the earnest preacher also in our time, is to separate the secondary from the primary and essential elements of the doctrine, and to use and apply the doctrine itself, thus generically conceived, as the Holy Spirit doubtless intended it to be used, for the awakening of sinners and the edifying of those who believe.

11. Divine motive in election; love for the elect.

One of the most valuable helps to such appreciation and use is discernible in the declaration, suggested in nearly all the Protestant creeds, that election on the part of God is always an act of love—a manifestation of the same eternal and unconquerable love which made Christ a Mediator for all sinners, and which gave the Gospel of salvation through him to mankind. If election is, in the phrase of Wesley, a divine appointment, a determination that some men should attain eternal happiness, such an appointment cannot be regarded as an arbitrary and inscrutable act of will, or as the edict of an impenetrable sovereignty. Still less is this divine predestination to be confused with stony fatalism on one hand or with merely naturalistic determinism on the other. In such an appointment every holy attribute in God is engaged—every perfection of his being is illustrated. It must not indeed be said that this determination is one which justice to those who are thus appointed to spiritual and eternal happiness, constrains God to form. Were election an act of justice simply, something which was due from God to his creatures and which they might in equity expect or

demand, such election would have no legitimate place in a scheme of salvation which has its beginning and its ending in free and abounding grace. The Symbols therefore simply express the universal view of evangelical Protestantism in declaring that God out of *his mere love and mercy*, and for *the praise of his glorious grace*, and without being *moved thereto by anything in the creature* on any ground of equity or desert, has predestinated or appointed some men unto everlasting life. Just as he freely provideth and offereth to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him (L. C. 32), doing this *out of his mere free grace and love*, so the application of this salvatory scheme in the case of the persons actually saved through it, is to be recognized as in all its elements an expression of grace and mercy, unconstrained and infinite in both quality and volume.

Of the intrinsic worthiness and perfection of such elective love, contemplated as the impelling motive in the divine mind, it is impossible to speak in sufficiently exalted praise. Like the love disclosed in the person and mission of the Redeemer, it passeth knowledge: its breadth and length and depth and height are simply immeasurable. But we may fitly emphasize two of its essential qualities, its equity and its sovereignty. First of all, the grace of God in election is not an unregulated outflow of feeling, without adequate regard for the moral principles involved in its expression. Not only the innate perfection of his being, but the requirements of his position as moral governor, demand that his love for sinners and his purpose to save them shall be controlled by a righteousness as firm and moveless as his eternal throne. Much of the current criticism of the doctrine is based on a radical misconception at this point: it involves the unwarranted supposition that, since God is intrinsically loving and gracious, all men alike ought to be and therefore will be elect—appointed to eternal happiness. But the elective grace, like the providential mercy of God, must be absolutely equitable in itself and in all its manifestations. Not only is it true that justice does not constrain him to choose and appoint any to be saved; that justice doubtless may and does constrain him to withhold this privilege from others,—even from those who to our narrow vision may seem equally deserving.

The second quality of this elective love is its free and absolute sovereignty. Such sovereignty is resident as an essential quality in all love: in all its nobler forms love flows forth as a stream from its fountain, not through external constraint but rather under the impulsion of an interior life. There is indeed a sense in which,

as within the family, affection becomes a duty as well as an impulse; yet even here the highest excellence and beauty of such affection lie in the fact that it is spontaneous—the outflow not of the will merely, impelled by a sense of outward obligation, but rather of a deeply seated principle in the moral nature. It is true that God in giving life to any creature places himself under a species of obligation to sustain that life during its appointed term of existence and within its own ordained sphere. His universal providence is in this aspect a providence exercised under the cogency of appropriate law. But mercy as shown toward sinful man is love flowing out freely toward those who have forfeited even this providential claim, and whom equity by itself can only condemn. Elective grace is the conferring of wholly undeserved favor and blessing, under the impulse of an interior principle whose manifestations are as truly and as absolutely sovereign as was the comprehensive decree wherein God in unlimited freedom ordained what soever comes to pass. Much of the popular criticism upon such election rests upon the failure to apprehend suitably this underlying fact, that God is not only righteous but absolutely sovereign in his grace,—at liberty to bestow or withhold such grace at his own pleasure, and at liberty to bestow just such measures of his grace and blessing as he may freely choose to grant.

It is obvious consequently that, as the motive in election is to be found entirely in God rather than in man, so the ultimate ground and reason for such election must be found, not in what man is as the recipient, but in the mind and purpose of God alone. This is the chief significance of the phrases so frequently, in wide contrast with the Roman dogma of merit, current in Protestant symbolism,—with no regard or respect for man, without consideration for their works, without any virtue or merit in us, and the like. The Synod of Dort elaborates these phrases in the general declaration, that election is not founded upon faith foreseen, or the obedience of faith, holiness or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite cause or condition upon which it depends; and in continuation affirms positively that the good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious procedure,—he not choosing the elect in view of their antecedent virtue or the possible qualities of their action, but of his own free and sovereign will, in order that being elect they may believe and obey and lead holy lives. The Arminian Remonstrance, though in open antagonism with the theology of Dort, still held (Art. I) that God by an eternal, unchangeable purpose determined out of the fallen race of man to save in Christ, and for the sake of Christ, and through

Christ, those who should by the grace of the Holy Ghost believe in Christ, and should persevere in faith and the obedience of faith. It freely admitted that man has no such saving virtue in himself as would commend him to God as worthy of salvation, and that all good deeds or movements that can be conceived must be ascribed to the prevenient grace of God in Christ.

12. End of Election: holiness and usefulness.

In connection with this view of the motive and ground of election as found in God alone, it will be well to note more closely the end or object divinely sought in such election. When the intent of God in this gracious procedure is said, in the phrase of Wesley, to be eternal happiness, or in the language of the Symbols and of other Protestant formularies, to be everlasting life or *eternal glory*, the way is inadvertently left open for some serious misconceptions of the supreme design in such election. It is painfully obvious that many persons contemplate Christianity in general as a divine scheme for securing crowns and honors and unending felicities in eternity, rather than as a gracious process instituted for the development of holy character in this present world. Multitudes there are who fail to recognize in any profound sense the fundamental truth, that our Holy Faith aims to secure, not happiness hereafter alone, but holiness and usefulness also in the life that now is,—that it is not designed simply to confer external privileges or advantages upon its adherents above others, and so to increase the sum of their happiness as an ultimate end, but rather primarily to make them worthy by making them Christlike, and thus to introduce them both here and hereafter to a felicity whose basis is complete and eternal reconciliation with God through Christ.

For the correction of such false conceptions, far too widely influential in our time, it is indispensable to emphasize constantly the two primal ends which are said in the Scriptures to be sought of God in this elective process. The first of these ends is personal holiness—the renovation of heart and life in conformity with the teaching of Christ and through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. There are indeed illustrations in the Bible of individuals called and set apart for certain tasks of grace, or perchance of judgment, in whom such personal regeneration was not requisite as a qualification. But wherever election is described in the spiritual sense of the term, personal holiness is invariably brought forward, both as the purpose divinely sought, and as the infallible sign that this purpose is being graciously accomplished. Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, is the strong

statement of Paul in that sublime chapter which, more fully than any other in the New Testament, discusses the tenet of election as to its source, its motive, its method and its end in the complete moral restoration and consequent eternal blessedness of the elect. Whether it be a prophet or an apostle, or even a simple disciple, who is thus chosen of God, elect according to the divine foreknowledge, there is no clear exception in the New Testament to the rule that the sanctification of the elect person, the renewal of the character and the life according to the pattern of Christ, is one purpose immediately contemplated in the divine mind. That an elect person should continue in a state of sin is inconceivable; that one who willingly remains in such a state is an elect person, is in the nature of things impossible. In a word, the elect are saved invariably not in sin but from sin.

The second primal end is usefulness—usefulness in conjunction with the spiritual kingdom of God on the earth. We may read here and there in the Bible of one whose personal usefulness in such conjunction we may not be able to distinguish: some even among the apostles left behind them no distinct traces of their personal efficiency or value as representatives of Christ and his cause. Yet even the thief on the cross, in whom the divine election became a palpable reality only in his dying moments, has in his tremulous prayer to be remembered, rendered a service to the church which cannot cease down to the end of time. So in the life of the elect of God through all generations this principle of usefulness, though sometimes indistinguishable to human eyes, has had and will ever have its constant and sublime verification. The universal and comprehending fact is, that election is in order to usefulness as well as holiness; that God has always ordained paths of service for his elect to walk in; and that it is in this way that he has planned to carry forward, through his elect servants, the vast task of restoring our fallen humanity to himself. It may safely be affirmed that God never chose a soul to be his spiritually, without providing a suitable sphere and work for it, and commissioning it to be useful in his name and cause. In every case the individual election corresponds in spirit and aim with that sublime plan of salvation, holy and beneficent, in which it becomes a constituent part: to suppose otherwise would render such election an inscrutable and unprofitable mystery.

These glimpses of the divine design in election enable us more clearly on one side to see the incalculable value of the doctrine in the case of all who intelligently and cordially accept it, and on the other side to detect more readily the unworthiness of

much of the criticism upon it, current especially in irreligious circles. The Thirty-Nine Articles justly say (XVII), that the consideration of our election in Christ is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, . . . as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love toward God. It has indeed been alleged that the doctrine inclines those who hold it to an unwarrantable assurance in their own salvation, and by natural consequence to the neglect of those Christian duties and services which alone can justify such assurance. But the obvious fact rather is, that in the case of the true saint the hope and the assurance of being thus elect of God becomes not only an unspeakable comfort, as the Anglican formulary affirms, but also a most potent stimulus both to the culture of spiritual holiness, and to the diligent service of Christ in whatsoever sphere of religious usefulness. A truly elect person, as Paul repeatedly teaches, desires that all other persons the world over should enjoy the same gracious privilege: any selfish satisfaction or exultation in view of our election, as distinguishing us from others, would justify the suspicion that we had never attained the elect condition. The two-fold end of God being thus practically appreciated, and partially realized in fact, the really elect soul becomes at once animated by an assurance, fired by a zeal, elevated and purified by a holy confidence in the grace that not only predestinates and calls but also justifies and glorifies, which enable it to make its calling and election sure by experimental evidences that permit of no mistake. And the stronger the conviction as to the truth of the doctrine, the more inspiring and purifying becomes by gracious necessity its influence on both mind and life.

The Thirty-Nine Articles speak also of the serious errors into which multitudes of curious and carnal persons, as they are there styled, fall through their failure to apprehend the divine election in its true spirit and intent. Many such persons desire on the one hand, often with intense selfishness, to obtain certain privileges or honors or pleasures, especially in the life to come, which the elect are supposed to receive. On the other hand, many are willing even to impugn the divine character or administration under the Gospel, because they suppose themselves excluded unjustly from the circle of the elect. On one side they profess an anxious wish to be saved, while on the other they attribute to God and his elective purpose, rather than to their own will, the fact they are not among the saved. The plain and sad reality is that they have no desire whatever to be graciously elected, if the end or aim

of such election is to be either holiness or religious usefulness. They do not wish to be made holy; they refuse to serve God in his kingdom of grace; they deliberately choose to continue in their selfish state; they stand out willfully against all invitations to repent and believe in Christ; they have no wish or intention to become Christians in heart and life, as all the elect in fact are. In a word, they desire to obtain the blessings of religion without the experience of religion,—to enter heaven and share in its blessedness and its rewards, without either becoming holy in heart, or endeavoring to glorify God in their lives. Curious and carnal persons indeed they are, as that venerable symbol describes them, —wholly unworthy of the blessing which God graciously confers on his own elect children.

13. Human relations to Election: Human responsibility.

It has often been questioned whether much of the controversy within evangelical circles respecting this important tenet in Christian theology, might not be reconciled through a more distinct recognition on all sides of the true relations of human agency to this divine procedure. To exclude such agency altogether, as if man had neither choice nor responsibility in the matter of his personal election, is one extreme: to exalt such agency unduly, as if the will or worth of man were in some decisive way conditioning or constraining the divine choice, is certainly another extreme. Calvinism, in its supreme desire to exalt the divine sovereignty and magnify the divine glory in the predestination of those who are called to be saints, has fallen too largely into the former mistake. It is no less apparent that evangelical Arminianism, in laying special stress on the human faith and obedience always associated as requisites with the divine call and appointment, has fallen into the latter. And the problem of reducing this antinomy in belief to the smallest practical dimensions,—the problem of combining in one balanced and adequate conception those cardinal elements of the doctrine in which Arminians and Calvinists are substantially agreed, is one which may well claim the consideration of thoughtful minds of whatever school of faith.

The Auburn Declaration sought to solve this problem by a distinct affirmation on one side, that election is a sovereign act of the divine mercy which has its basis, not in the foreseen faith and obedience of the elect, but rather in the divine will as a producing cause; and on the other, that the gracious purpose of God in election never really takes effect (or becomes a conscious fact in the experience of any elect person), independently of faith and a holy

life. The elective decree is indeed determined from eternity, but is also continually coming into existence as a fact, and being realized and perfected in time; and so far as actual salvation is concerned, while the result is evidently determined of God, it is also in some real sense determinable by and through human choice. It is clearly inadmissible to claim that the elect are saved without regard to what they are or what they may do, since no one can have any assurance whatever that he is one of the elect if he does not discern in himself the signs of such election in an active faith and in true holiness and usefulness of life. For the same reason it becomes no less inadmissible for any to assume that, not being among the elect, they will not and cannot be saved, whatever measure of faith they might exercise, or however obedient or holy or useful they might be in their lives. No one having in himself these characteristic signs or qualities, can have any just ground for supposing that he is not an elect person;—as certainly he could have no desire or disposition to take such a view of himself and his spiritual prospects. On the other hand, the obvious fact is that those who take refuge in the hypothesis that they are not among the elect, and therefore cannot be saved whatever they do, never in fact do exercise the faith or manifest the obedience requisite as evidences of election. Their objection to the doctrine involves the groundless assumption that, although they may possess the qualities which are characteristic of the elect, they are by the divine decree excluded, however worthy, from the circle of the saved. But is it not clear that, so long as they fail to exhibit in themselves these vital products of electing grace, they cannot claim that they ought to be counted among the elect? Ought they not rather to recognize the alarming probability, that they are among those whom God has justly determined to pass by in his distributive application of salvation provided in the Gospel?

On one side it must be recognized as a fundamental truth, that God not only chooses those whom he would save, and also determines wherein salvation shall consist, but is himself the procuring cause of all saving experience. He not only has the right to require faith and obedience and holiness as essential elements in such salvation; it is his to take such steps, to bring to bear such influences, as shall secure these indispensable conditions of election. But it should never be forgotten on the other side that, in the weighty phrase of John Howe, God knows how to govern his creatures according to their nature, and changes the hearts of men according to that natural way wherein the human faculties are wont to work. By such processes he not only elects, but renders

his election effectual in the individual soul,—often in ways inscrutable to us, yet always in such a manner that, while our faith and obedience are in a sense his products, they are also as truly ours as any other acts or experiences of our lives. Our native inability as sinful to exercise such saving qualities is supplemented by the gracious ability he bestows, and we thus become elect individually in and through him, while at the same time we never can become elect in fact without our own conscious purpose and concurrence. There is thus a primal sense in which election, with all that is involved in it, is a sovereign and unconditioned act of God: there is also a vital sense in which such election is realized and made effectual only in and through the free choice of man—a choice induced and energized through divine grace alone.

Such is universally the practical conviction of those who are saved, whatever name they bear. They agree in referring the precious result wholly to God as its proper source and author; they extol his relation to that result as primal, sovereign, efficacious. Yet they agree in believing that the purpose to save is never carried out into fact, except where faith and holy living are manifested as the responsive acts of man. They indeed realize that these acts are never found in man excepting through the gracious ministries of the Spirit: they also affirm that such acts, though thus produced, are never in themselves the meritorious ground of salvation. They hold with Augustine, as quoted with approval by Calvin, that the grace of God does not find men fit to be elected but makes them so. Yet they also hold that vital faith and loving obedience and holiness of heart and life alone indicate a renewed and saved nature,—that in fact they are salvation, in its most inward essence. Emphasizing on the one hand the primary and sovereign efficiency of God in the whole matter, they appreciate also the part which under his requisition they are to take in working out their own salvation, and with joy and confidence devote themselves to this task as the supreme business of their lives. All of grace, is the glad testimony of Calvinist and Arminian alike: grace verified in belief and life, is the practical test which Arminians and Calvinists alike cordially accept.

14. Reprobation—Preterition: Election unto condemnation.

The doctrine of election as presented in the Symbols finds its dark antithesis in the dogma of reprobation, as set forth chiefly in the chapter (III) on the Eternal Decree. The term is used comprehensively to describe the entire plan and dealing of God with that portion of the human race who are not elected unto everlasting life. In

earlier usage it referred especially, as in the third section of this chapter, to the eternal counsel and purpose, as predestinating or foreordaining a certain portion of mankind to everlasting death, in illustration of the divine justice. In a modified and limited sense, it refers to the final or ultimate act of judgment in condemning sinners—not as the carrying out of an eternal purpose formed irrespectve of character, but simply on account of their sin as actually committed. A further modification appears in the milder term, preterition, which signifies either the negative passing by in fact, or the sovereign determination to pass by, those who refuse to receive the grace of election. Such preterition as an act presupposes a condition of sin already existing, but is not to be regarded as in any sense a cause of such sin. As a determination in the divine mind, it is an immanent purpose to leave men in their sin, contemplated as an event hereafter to occur,—such determination in no wise causing the sin which is condemned and punished. Reprobation in the modified sense also presupposes the existence of sin deserving condemnaton, but is not to be viewed as a cause or occasion of the sin so condemned. Preterition thus stands at the beginning and reprobation, in this sense, at the final closing of the divine dealing with this portion of mankind,—God in the first instance choosing in sovereignty not to save from the commission of sin, and in the second determining as judge to condemn for or on account of sin committed.

It is noticeable that some of the Protestant Creeds (the Augsburg Conf.; the Heidelberg Cat.; the Thirty-Nine Articles) say nothing except by implication in regard to such predestination unto death. Others among them, especially the French and Belgic, affirm simply the negative preterition, without introducing the positive reprobation. We believe, says the former, (XII) that from the corruption and general condemnation in which all men are plunged, God . . . called those whom he hath chosen . . . to display in them the riches of his mercy, but leaves the rest in this same corruption and condemnation, to show forth in them his justice. The Belgic declares, (XVI) that in the matter of eternal predestination God is both merciful and just; merciful, since he delivers from the universal perdition and ruin wrought by sin all whom . . . he hath elected in Christ Jesus; just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves. The Synod of Dort presents the fact of preterition more elaborately, (I:15) in the statement that, while some are elected, others not elect are passed by, according to the eternal purpose,—God out of his most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure,

determining to leave them in the common misery in which they have willfully plunged themselves, . . . permitting them in his just judgment to follow on in their own ways, yet purposing to condemn and punish them finally for their sin. . The Synod, however, pronounced it a calumny to say that the Reformed Churches taught that God out of his own absolute or arbitrary will, and without any respect of sin, hath foreordained the greater part or any part of mankind to be damned.

Other continental formularies employ the more positive term, reprobation, as including both the primal passing by and the ultimate retributive condemnation,—though chiefly, as in the Second Helv. Conf. in an incidental rather than elaborate form. It is interesting to note in that Confession the alleviating declaration that, although God well knows who are his, and though the number of the elect is said to be but small, yet we ought to hope kindly concerning all, nor rashly to count any one among the reprobate. A similar informal reference to the reprobate as a class appears in the Scotch Confession. In the Irish Articles, under the general head of Predestination, we find the first formal declaration that God in his eternal and unchangeable counsel hath reprobated unto death a certain number of mankind, known only to him, which number can neither be increased nor diminished,—a phrase derived immediately from Augustine, who like Calvin with an unswerving fidelity to logical coherence, affirmed the existence of a two-fold predestination, gemina predestinatio, involving all mankind even from eternity. It was doubtless from this formulary that the still more positive statements of the Symbols sprang. We may trace in both the influence of the startling propositions of Calvin, (Inst. III:21) that God from eternity determined in himself what he would have to become of every individual of the race; that all mankind were not created by him for a similar destiny, but eternal life was foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others; and that every human being was created for the one or the other of these ends. It is noticeable, however, that the Symbols nowhere follow Calvin in affirming that the portion of mankind who are not elect unto salvation were created to be damned, but invariably affirm that they are in fact condemned to punishment *for their sins*, and for their sins only. The judicial reprobation is not viewed merely as a purpose formed in eternity, but also as an event in time, following chronologically as the sequel of a career of sin. The Symbols endorse the earlier creeds in declaring that God *passes by* those who are not elect, leaves them in their estate of sinfulness, inasmuch as he has the

sovereign right *to extend or withhold mercy as he pleaseth.* They also declare (V:vi) that God sometimes as a righteous judge withholds grace, withdraws gifts, exposes to temptation, gives wicked and ungoldly men over to their own sinfulness, permits a process of induration and excecation to establish itself in their nature, and even in his justice *ordains them to dishonor and wrath.* But they never affirm that the final condemnation of the wicked is based on any other ground or has any other cause than their own willful sin against him; they nowhere teach, as has sometimes been alleged, that God created any portion of mankind in order to exhibit his justice in their final condemnation.

We may turn from these confessional statements to consider the essential truth in the case. It is certainly obvious that, while the plan of salvation is ample enough in its scope and provisions to secure the pardon and restoration of all mankind, the entire race has not even yet heard of it, or been providentially brought within the range of its benefits. It is obvious also, that among those who have heard the glad tidings, multitudes almost innumerable turn away from the gracious offer, and consequently fail utterly to be saved thereby. And while this sad conclusion is immediately the result of their personal desire and purpose to continue in sin, their deliberate choice of evil rather than good, it is likewise obvious that the will of God sustains some distinct relation to that result,—even to the extent of acquiescence in their sinful determination, and of a sovereign purpose to surrender them, without further provision than that exhibited in the Gospel, to the legitimate issue of their wicked resistance to his just and holy claims. Nor is it less obvious that it belongs to God rather than man, to decide upon the amount of gracious influence which by his Word and Spirit and through his providence, he shall bring to bear upon men in order to induce them to turn from their evil ways and live; and that, for aught we can discover, he may in his sovereignty justly leave them, in the phrase of the Canon of Dort, in the misery in which they have willfully plunged themselves. Certainly it is obvious that, so long as they are deliberately resisting all the influences which in his wondrous scheme of grace he has determined to bring to bear upon them in order to their reconciliation with him, they can have no just ground of complaint if, in the language of the Confession, he passes them by, or *gives them over*, to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan. There must somewhere be a point where equity itself forbids the further exercise of mercy—where God is constrained to withhold his grace, to withdraw his

proper gifts, and to abandon such willful and obdurate subjects to their chosen career of sinfulness. And is it not clear also that, as the final outcome of such persistent rejection of his offered reconciliation, God may at last not only leave them henceforth to the induration and the corruption and the ruin which sin by its own nature involves, but in the solemn phrase of the Confession, may rightly *ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin*, to the praise of his glorious justice?

It is certainly a truth of Scripture, and one which cannot be too earnestly emphasized, that God may equitably leave, and in fact does in many instances leave, sinners to the sinfulness to which they cling in spite of his gracious efforts to deliver them. In other words, preterition, or the passing by of some among those who thus resist divine grace, is a fact whose occurrence cannot be questioned, and whose rightfulness no one is at liberty to challenge. It cannot reasonably be claimed that God is bound in justice to do more than he is actually doing, or even that it is possible for him through his appointed scheme of mercy to do more, for the salvation of those who are willfully transmuting his blessed Gospel into a savor of death unto death. Nor is it any less a truth of Scripture, any less a fact of experience, that God may and does in equity pronounce judicial condemnation at last on those who thus trifle with and resist his grace,—not only giving them over finally to the sinful corruption in which they have chosen to abide, but arraigning them at his righteous bar for their persistence in evil, and especially for the crowning sin of trifling with and openly rejecting his gracious offers in the Gospel. In these practical conclusions evangelical Christians of all types are essentially agreed. Even the Arminian Remonstrance admits that by an eternal and unchangeable purpose, God determined . . . to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ—relinquere et condemnare.

It surely is clear that the solemn and practical truths here indicated can never be ignored in Christian theology, or treated as trivial in their bearings upon human salvation, without incurring the charge of unfaithfulness to the Gospel, and exposing the souls of men to dreadful peril. Preterition is a spiritual fact of immeasurable import, and reprobation, at least in the sense of judicial condemnation, is a fact of even vaster significance. How far and in what forms the doctrine may profitably be introduced or emphasized in an evangelical creed, is a question of serious moment. We have seen that in some of the Protestant formularies there is

hardly a trace of it in either aspect, while in others preterition only is affirmed, often incidentally rather than in technical form. It is apparent also, that the doctrine is less prominent in the earlier than in the later, and less prominent also in the continental, excepting the noted Canon of Dort, than in British symbolism,—especially if we include in the latter group the Lambeth Articles, which openly declare that those who are not predestinated unto salvation, shall be necessarily damned for their sins. We have seen that the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster go beyond all preceding creeds, except the Irish Articles, in asserting and defining not only preterition but judicial reprobation,—thus giving to the doctrine of Calvin its completest confessional expression, though they do not assert, as Calvin did, a positive foreordination unto damnation, even from eternity. That their emphatic statements have been subject to very grave misapprehensions, and have been strenuously urged as objections to the entire Calvinistic scheme, as incorporated in the Symbols, will be readily admitted. It is also apparent that, with the advance of larger conceptions of the nature and scope of the Gospel as a divine offer of mercy made to the entire race, such misapprehensions have become more and more injurious—more and more difficult to meet. And it may be questioned whether many who adhere in good faith to the teaching of the Symbols concerning the divine sovereignty in general, have not been influenced by such adverse criticism even to the practical ignoring of the solemn truths which these statements do after all embody.

The desire to obtain some confessional relief from the severity of the confessional teaching is natural in itself and has recently become quite general in Presbyterian circles. The United Church of Scotland has indicated this desire in its Declaration, that the doctrine of the divine decree, including the doctrine of election unto eternal life, should be held in connection and in harmony with the truth that God is not willing that any should perish, but has provided, and in the Gospel has offered, a salvation sufficient for all men; and also with the truth that every one is responsible to God for his dealing with this free and unrestricted offer. The Declaration of the Free Church affirms that the church does not teach, or regard the Confession as teaching, the foreordination of men to death irrespective of their sin. The Cumberland Church in the same spirit, after declaring in general that God has determined to bring to pass whatever should be for his own glory, condenses the whole subject of the divine decrees in the statement that God has not decreed anything respecting his creature, man,

contrary to his revealed will or written Word, which Word declares his sovereignty over all his creatures, the ample provision he has made for their salvation, and his determination to punish the finally impenitent with everlasting destruction, and to save the true believer with an everlasting salvation. One of the most valuable amendments proposed in the recent Revision in our own communion, indicates this desire in still more significant form. In that amendment it was proposed to omit the two sections (iii and iv), in the chapter on the Eternal Decree, which seem to inculcate the dogma of an original purpose in the mind of God to consign some men and angels to eternal death, not simply *propter peccatum*, but from all eternity as an exhibition of penal justice. It was also proposed to substitute for two other sections (v and vii) in the chapter, the following statements as embodying all that can usefully be incorporated in a churchly creed on a matter so abstruse and so perplexing to faith:

God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath predestinated an innumerable multitude of mankind unto life, and hath particularly and unchangeably chosen them in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, not on account of any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

The rest of mankind God saw fit, according to the unsearchable counsel of his will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, not to elect unto everlasting life; and them hath he ordained to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice; yet hath he no pleasure in the death of the wicked, nor is it his decree, but the wickedness of their own hearts, which restraineth and hindereth them from accepting the free offer of his grace made in the Gospel.

Postponing the consideration of Salvation as a gracious Process, with the agencies engaged in it and the spiritual results secured thereby, we may here conclude our study of the divine Plan of Salvation with some final observations, suggested by the preceding survey:

15. Concluding survey: characteristics of the Plan of Salvation.

First: It is throughout a supernatural plan; originating in God, revealed by God, and proclaimed by God as his chosen scheme for the reconciliation and spiritual restoration of our sinful race. Contrasted with other salvatory devices such as the brain and

heart of man have devised, and regarded as a human construction merely, we should still be constrained on fair comparison to pronounce it immeasurably superior to all other human proposals. But the careful study of its elements and provisions compels us to judge that no human mind or combination of minds could ever have devised such a plan: had we no warrant of inspiration to rest upon, we should still on the most faithful inspection declare it to be superhuman. But God has given us ample certification in inspired Scripture that it is his own scheme, formed even before the fall of our race, wisely adjusted by him to all the exigencies which that fall has introduced, stamped in each of its provisions with his own signature, and in its spirit and all its unfoldings divine. He who does not reverently recognize this fundamental element of supernaturalness in this redemptive scheme,—who does not rest in the conviction that God is its personal author throughout, and discern in it not only the divine grace but also the divine authority, rightfully requiring him and all men to accept it, as the only adequate method of deliverance from sin and guilt, has attained no suitable conception of it, and can in no wise be personally saved by it. If this Gospel of grace and holiness be not thus truly and absolutely divine in origin and spirit and method, it must be pronounced an impenetrable and intolerable mystery—the greatest and darkest of all religious delusions.

Second: It is a comprehensive and complete plan; containing in itself everything that is requisite to the spiritual restoration of mankind, and perfect in every adjustment to their spiritual condition and needs. Prostrate as the race is in its conscious corruption and guilt, it has never ceased to devise schemes for its moral recovery and its reconciliation with God. It has sought by penance and sacrifices to obtain forgiveness from heaven: it has proposed to secure salvation through culture and discipline: it has traversed the entire range of possibilities in the struggle to shake off its load of guilt, and to secure spiritual purity and peace. Human philosophy has sought to solve the universal problem;—sometimes by doubts or negations, sometimes by dreamy ideals which prove in the experiment to be painfully void of saving power. As Plato dreamed of redemption as a release from the bondage of sense, to be secured through the culture of the true, the beautiful and the good within the soul, so philosophy in all ages has endeavored to teach men how to be saved by processes originating in human methods rather than in God. But Christianity is the only system that has taken scientific account of the great disease of humanity in all its manifold phases, or has proposed a

remedy adjusted at every point to the nature of the universal disorder, and potent enough to work out in all who submit themselves to its treatment a perfect cure. Chalmers in his Institutes has described the disorder with scientific precision and with unhesitating fidelity, and on the other hand has set forth the divine remedy in all its fullness and glory, as containing the assurance of a complete and an eternal recovery for all who in faith will receive its gracious mediation. And what he has eloquently said, is abundantly verified alike by the scientific investigations and by the experimental tests of myriads who have found in Christianity the only comprehensive, the only efficacious remedy for sin which the race has ever known.

Third: This divine plan is by its own nature unchangeable;—time neither alters its provisions, nor exhausts its effectiveness, nor impairs its claim on human acceptation. Men have sought to eliminate some of these provisions as needless, to add other elements as if essential, to introduce new conceptions of it, to present the divine scheme in novel aspects or reduce it to the terms of human philosophy. It is indeed a fact of history that with the ages new forms of stating, new modes of explaining, new varieties of reason and argument, have from time to time arisen; and it may properly be anticipated that further variations in such presentation will arise in future ages, as men shall seek to describe this divine plan in more effective language and measure. But that plan is now in substance and spirit precisely what it was in the days of Christ and his apostles, and such it will remain so long as time lasts. Errorists may pervert it; speculative minds may corrupt and distort it; an unsanctified ministry or priesthood may fail to apprehend, and therefore fail to set it forth; churches may lose their confidence in its efficacy, and seek after salvation by other processes, more congenial to the natural man. But the divine plan stands now as of old, sufficiently described in holy Scripture, as plain and as commanding as when the Immanuel first proclaimed it,—the eternal offer of Heaven, clear as the sun and as unfading, on whose acceptance or rejection the salvation of the world in all ages alike must turn. God has devised the plan, clearly and authoritatively proposed it, made all the provisions needful to its complete efficacy; and while He remains as he is, his gracious scheme will also remain, fixed and unchangeable.

Fourth: It is an effectual plan; not merely perfect in theory, but practically successful in all lands and times alike, and in every soul of man that yields to its saving power. The final proof of the value of any remedy must lie in the testimony

of those who have been cured by it: the remedy that heals, that heals in all varieties of circumstance, that heals in every case where it is faithfully applied, needs no further commendation. And God is willing to submit his saving scheme to this supreme test: the Bible appeals habitually to the witness of extended, established, incontrovertible experience. If it were found that any who sought salvation by this process failed to attain it,—if it were shown that there were countries or races where this remedy was found experimentally to be impracticable or ineffective,—even if there were individual men who, after submitting to this divine process of redemption, declared themselves unaided and unblest through it, ominous shadows of doubt would be cast at once upon the entire scheme. Nay more: such testimony would prove beyond question that the Gospel was after all a delusive device of man—in no sense a veritable revelation from God. But on the other hand, the unanimous testimony of innumerable millions, from the various races and countries of earth, uttered century after century, in the face of opposition and unbelief of every conceivable type, is for all practical purposes a sufficient, an abounding proof that this saving scheme has come into the world from God, and is therefore infinitely worthy of all human credence and acceptation.

Fifth: This divine plan is in reality unassailable; it has stood, still stands, will continue through the ages to stand, as the one and only method of deliverance and regeneration. At this late date in the history of religious thought, this proposition seems almost incapable of challenge. In view of the vast array of argument brought to bear against this Gospel by the speculations, the doubts, the unbelief of men in former times,—an array which has been vanquished in successive conflicts lasting through centuries—it seems well-nigh impossible that any really new assault should ever be undertaken, or at least should ever be in any large degree successful. It is freely admitted that if Christianity could be effectively assailed at this central point, its essential supernaturalness would be questioned at every other point; its claim to be a divine faith would be not only impaired, but fundamentally overthrown. Here is the central citadel of Christian belief and Christian trust; if this were captured, all would be lost forever. But is not this citadel impregnable? Is not this saving Plan a glorious, an assured, an unassailable reality? And will not the world, in its conscious sin and guilt and corruption, finally turn away from all human schemes and devices, to accept this divine Plan just as it stands in its proportion and beauty and its indissoluble strength as the one and only Hope for man?

LECTURE EIGHTH—THE PROCESS OF SALVATION.

SALVATION A PROCESS: THE HOLY SPIRIT AS AGENT: MAN AS SALVABLE: EFFECTUAL CALLING—REGENERATION: JUSTIFICATION: SANCTIFICATION.

C. F.: CH. IX–XIII. L. C. 57–9: 65–75. S. C. 29–35.

The genetic formation and progress of doctrine in the Symbols deserve most careful consideration. Both the Confession and the Catechisms start out, as we have seen, with a series of *credenda* which are both primal in order and fundamental in importance. Revelation in its nature and aim and contents; God in his character, purposes and relations; creation and providence as divine acts; Man in his original constitution and relationship to God, and especially in his sinful condition and need,—these are presented at the outset as the primordial bases of proper Christian belief. Then follows in generic form the doctrine of salvation from sin, revealed in the aspect of a gracious purpose and covenant—a salvation rendered possible through the incarnation and messiahship of the one Mediator between God and man, and made available to sinners in and through his several offices as prophet, priest and king. The first eight chapters of the Confession, constituting one fourth of the entire Symbol, and a nearly equal proportion of the two Catechisms, are concerned with these fundamental doctrines. The obvious reason is that all that was to be affirmed later on respecting salvation as an actual experience, and respecting the Christian life established through gracious union with God in Christ, must of necessity rest on these fundamental propositions. He who does not accept these primary truths—who does not hold in substance what the Symbols thus affirm concerning the Scriptures, concerning God, concerning man in his sin and need, concerning the divine purpose to rescue and save our sinful race, and concerning the incarnate Son of God and Son of Man as the true and only Savior of the world, will of course fail to discern or appreciate the teaching of the ten succeeding chapters in the Confession which set forth the actual process of salvation in its various stages and in its sublime results in human experience. If on the other hand these preliminary truths are accepted in their full breadth and significance as stated in the Symbols, both the mind

and the heart are prepared thereby to accept in its fullness that splendid conception of a salvation attained through the mediation and ministries of Christ alone, which is at once the center and the culmination of the Westminster scheme of doctrine, as indeed of all evangelical theology.

In this stately progression, this philosophic unfolding of sacred doctrine, the Symbols are equaled by none of the antecedent Protestant creeds. All sections of Protestantism were indeed substantially agreed respecting these primary verities, and all were more or less conscious, as several of the creeds make quite apparent, of the importance of incorporating them in some measure in their confessional structures. The Augsburg Confession, the Second Helvetic, and especially the earlier British symbols, are special illustrations of this fact. Yet the Westminster divines, standing as they did at a much later point in the theologic evolution, and appreciating more fully the value of more thorough system and greater completeness in an authoritative declaration of faith, went quite beyond their predecessors—as we have already had occasion to note—in setting forth in order these principia of doctrine as the foundations on which an adequate conception of salvation must ever rest. The earlier reformers from Luther and Calvin even down to the Synod of Dort, were more singly and anxiously concerned with the specific inquiry respecting salvation as a process and an experience, than with these preliminary truths. Nor is it strange that, confronted as they directly were with the false theories and falser practice of Rome, and battling with intense energy for the central principle of justification by faith in Christ alone, they should have failed somewhat in the formal recognition and expression of such fundamental articles of belief.

In the ten chapters of the Confession, now to be studied as containing the formulated doctrine of salvation, it is important to note at the outset the two main divisions of the general subject: the first, in chapters IX–XIII, presenting especially the saving process, while the five remaining chapters (XIV–XVIII), describe rather the resulting appropriation and experience on the part of man. As everywhere else, the Symbols place God in the foreground, as the source and author, and also the finisher of salvation,—bringing in as consequent what man is enabled through grace to do, and is therefore required to do, in order to be saved according to the divine plan. The sovereign ministries of the Spirit, the bestowment of needful grace as a gift, the effectual calling of the sinner by the divine voices incorporated in

the Gospel, his justification and adoption through the mediation of Christ, his sanctification through the active energies of the Holy Ghost; these all antecede the actual realization of the salvation offered, and in the order of both time and thought go before what man does, or is led to do, in the actual attainment of salvation. It is important, therefore, in the interest of clearness, that our thought should for the present be fixed simply on the salvatory process itself—reserving for further study what we are taught respecting the full experience and fruition of the saving scheme.

1. Preliminary suggestions: the term, process, defined: this process personal.

Some preliminary suggestions may profitably be noted here. And first: Salvation may justly be described as a process—a gracious operation of God both upon and within the soul of man, in order to its deliverance from the guilt and the power of sin, and its complete restoration to himself and to eternal life in Him. This divine operation is said in the Symbols to be in some aspects an act, and in others a work;—in one sense an instantaneous procedure of grace, and in another a procedure having successive stages, and requiring time for its full evolution. It may be helpfully considered in its totality as a gracious process, whose various features and movements can be noted by the thoughtful observer, and whose results are recognizable in the new life—in the regenerated character. It was clearly the purpose of the Westminster divines to represent salvation in some such aspect, though they nowhere use the term. It is probably true that they followed closely, perhaps too closely, the analytic method of presenting the doctrine, which was characteristic of the century following the Reformation,—so widely separating and dividing the elements in this gracious process as almost to induce forgetfulness of that organic unity which is its fundamental excellence. Yet their presentation of these elements, and of salvation itself as indicated in them, taken as a whole, is so well organized, and so clear and strong and complete, as to deserve the attentive interest of all who desire to know and comprehend the gracious plan and method of God in salvation.

Second: We should observe the continuous blending of the objective and the subjective elements,—the work of Christ for us, and work of the Spirit within us,—which characterizes the entire presentation. It had been alleged by the advocates of Rome that the Protestants had presented salvation as wholly an objective matter, and had failed correspondingly to appreciate the vital truth that salvation is also, and indeed chiefly, a subjective experience—a change of character, as they affirmed, rather than a change of

condition or estate. Whatever of truth may have been recognizable in such an allegation during the earlier stages of Protestantism, no such charge could properly be urged against the divines of Westminster. For, strongly as they held and affirmed the cardinal doctrine of salvation wrought out by Christ alone—a salvation divinely bestowed in our justification and adoption through the merits of his mediatorial work as distinguished from all human efforts or acts, they yet emphasized with equal fullness the subjective side of such salvation, and in the most positive and commanding form set forth a genuine religious experience, such as appears in repentance, in faith, in good works, and in personal perseverance and assurance, as being of the very essence and in some aspects the supreme substance of salvation. Multiplied illustrations of this fact will appear at various points in the proposed investigation.

Third: the language of the Symbols in setting forth the whole doctrine in both sections of it is mainly, almost entirely, scriptural. While the current theological distribution of the subject matter is adopted, the words used in the presentation are drawn for the most part immediately from the very Word of God. A comparison of the language of the Confession with that of the texts which were profusely adduced to support the doctrines affirmed, will show how anxious the compilers of that document were to carry with them a divine authoritativeness for each and every statement. Admirable illustrations of this fact may be seen in the confessional and catechetic definitions of justification and sanctification, and in the entire chapter on adoption. It is of course possible to frame even an essentially false dogma in biblical phraseology,—by some careful selection of terms, clauses, sentences, and by some adroit grouping of these into a series of propositions, to fabricate a doctrinal statement which in reality is quite unwarranted by the essential and duly harmonized teachings of the Bible. How much of this has been done, if not to buttress positive and dangerous heresy, still to support defective creeds or bolster up weak or partizan theologies, every student of the history of Christian doctrine too painfully knows. While it would be too much to say that the Westminster divines were altogether exempt from such liabilities, yet in the main they were remarkably free from exposure to any such charge. It is indeed to be observed that Protestant symbolism in nearly all its earlier varieties was singularly saturated with scripturalness in the best sense. This was natural, in view of the fact that its cardinal teachings could be maintained only on the authority of Holy Scripture, as distinct

from tradition and the dicta of the church. But it may justly be claimed that no finer strain of scripturalness appears anywhere among the Protestant creeds than is exhibited in the Westminster formularies, and that much of their convincing quality and of their power to hold those who have once embraced them, lies in this reverential recognition of the doctrinal supremacy of the Divine Word itself.

Fourth: It should be carefully borne in mind that this salvatory process as here described is throughout a process wrought, not by physical or natural forces, but by persons and upon persons. The Westminster divines were not indeed exempt from that temptation to carry natural law into the spiritual sphere, and to describe the phenomena and workings of grace through images and illustrations drawn from the field of nature, which has so often wrought mischief, not merely to theology, but as well to practical religion in later times. Illustrations of this mischievous tendency will appear occasionally as we progress in our investigations. But it should never be forgotten that on the divine side all is strictly and purely personal:—the Father as a person planning and instituting the entire scheme of salvation; the Son as a person teaching, acting, suffering and dying in the interest of mediation: the Spirit as a person working in love upon the human heart, effectually calling the sinner by his grace, inducing repentance and faith, teaching the duty of loving obedience, sanctifying the soul and the life together, and giving to the human recipient full assurance of faith and the spirit of perseverance unto the end. All on the divine side is strictly, purely personal.

It is just as true that the entire process on the side of man is equally a personal process. The gracious work of God in all its varied aspects is a work, not on the physical constitution, but on the moral nature—on the intellect, the spiritual sensibilities, and eminently on the will as the center of responsibility and the real seat of character. Granting for the moment all that can be affirmed as to the efficiency of external motives in determining human action, or as to the infirmity or deadness of the will itself as induced by depravity and sin, still the sinner must ever be recognized as a person, and his salvation must be regarded throughout as the experience of a living, active, responsible person—a real soul. Whether such a conception was legitimately carried out by the divines of Westminster at every point in the development of their doctrinal system, may justly be questioned. It is certain that considerable difference of view prevailed among them, Calvinists though they were, as to the effect of depravity on the

moral constitution and other kindred matters: there were disciples of Zwingli and Melanchthon as well as disciples of Luther and Calvin among them, as is indicated more than once in the published debates. But whether they were consistent or otherwise, or were able entirely to agree as to the philosophy of the facts, there is abundant evidence that all alike regarded salvation as a process wrought, not upon dead but on living souls—in other words, that it was a process in which persons, the human as well as the divine, were concerned throughout.

Holding steadily in view this fundamental conception of the process of salvation as personal at every stage, we may first turn to consider more specifically, the actors or agents in this process; and primarily, the Holy Spirit as a divine Person, having all the essential attributes and vested with all the potencies of Deity, and engaged no less truly than the Father or the Son in the sublime task of saving mankind from sin and spiritual destruction. Here it becomes at once noticeable that the Symbols, while setting forth with wonderful fullness the various offices and works of the Spirit, say much less directly about his personality than about that of either the Son or the Father. We note indeed the fundamental proposition (Ch. II:iii) that in the unity of the Godhead there be *three persons of one substance, power and eternity:* that one of these persons is God the Holy Ghost, and that this person eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son—as had been affirmed in the Apostolic and the Nicene creeds, and declared in several of the antecedent formulas of Protestantism. We also find the general declaration (Chap. IV: i) that it pleased the Holy Ghost, as well as the Father and the Son, in the beginning to create, or make of nothing the world and all things therein, whether visible or invisible,—a declaration which certainly implies his full divinity as truly as that of the first or the second person in the Godhead. The attributes, qualities, perfections of this divine person also are continually suggested in what is said of his operations in the field of grace, and his vital relations to human salvation. As in the Scriptures, so in the Symbols, he is repeatedly referred to as the Spirit of truth, taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto men;—as the Spirit of love and of grace, tenderly ministering to all the needs alike of sinner and saint in the interest of redemption;—as the holy Spirit, not only infinitely holy in and of himself, but the only and the adequate source of all holiness and sanctification in man. In a word, the entire argument for the Trinity in

2. The Spirit, as a personal agent in Salvation: his full personality.

God, is available to establish the full personality of the Holy Spirit as one of the three essential hypostases or personal modes of existence in the divine Being, interior and absolute as well as external and economic.

Yet his proper and separate personality seems to be left comparatively in the shadow, while our attention is fixed rather on his wonderful work, from the initial impacts of his grace onward through all the stages of saving experience, until it is consummated in the exaltation of the believing and trusting soul into glory everlasting. This was in fact the natural movement of evangelical thought during the vital crisis of the Reformation, as the earlier creeds abundantly indicate. The great issue between the Reformers and Rome related, not to the abstract dogma of the Trinity, or even to the personality of the Mediator or of the Holy Ghost, but rather to what the second and third persons in the Godhead were actually doing in the interest of human salvation. Hence it seemed enough to affirm their personality indirectly by condemning, as is done in the Augsburg Confession, (Art. I) the error that the Word signifieth a vocal word, and the Spirit a motion created in things; and by pointing to the ancient creeds, in which the essential truth had been already stated. The second Helvetic Confession, however, goes farther than the rest, even farther than the Westminster divines deemed it needful to go, in the remarkable article (III) wherein it formally condemns as blasphemers of the blessed Trinity all those who affirm that the Son and the Spirit are God by appointment or declaration only, nuncupatione, or that they are merely attributes or qualities, affectiones et proprietates, of the one God, the Father. How far such errors existed in Protestant circles, outside of the scant Socinian party, it is not easy to determine; certainly no leading Reformer would have hesitated to affirm with the creed of Nicaea, that the Holy Ghost as a divine person is the Lord and Giver of spiritual life, who together with the Father and the Son is therefore to be worshiped and glorified, as being equally with them God over all, blessed forever.*

*It is both interesting and instructive to trace the development of the church doctrine respecting the Holy Spirit during the period before the Nicene statement. Tertullian, A. D. 200: the Holy Ghost the Paraclete, the Sanctifier of the faith of those who believe—the Leader into all truth. Another form: the power of the Holy Ghost, to guide believers. Origen, A. D. 250: We believe also in the Holy Ghost, promised of old to the church, but granted in the appointed and fitting time. Novatian, A. D. 230: the Holy Ghost was associated in honor and dignity with the Father and the Son. Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea, A. D. 270: There is one Holy Ghost, having his existence

As to the offices and work of the divine Spirit, the Symbols are —as might be anticipated—much more full and elaborate than any of the antecedent Confessions. The compilers had the immense advantage derived not merely from these more primitive formularies which were in their hands, but from the discussions and controversies respecting this work which prevailed during the latter half of the sixteenth and the earlier decades of the seventeenth century. The Socinian aberration, the Syncretistic controversy in Germany, the Arminianism of Holland, and other kindred varieties in dogma, more or less variant from the essential truth, were all before them as they wrote. The theologies of the period, from high Turretinianism downward to the developing Moderatism of their age, were in their hands. Hence, the elaborateness, almost excessive, which marks their distribution of the general theme,—the measured order of thought, and the stately progress in statement, the careful grouping of elements, and the diligent conservation of everything essential to the complete exposition of the doctrine. It has indeed been questioned whether in their earnest desire to set salvation forth as a work of God rather than of man—to give all honor and glory to the Spirit as at once the author and finisher of human faith regarded as an experience, they did not retire the human factor in the case too much from view. In this day of larger light and broadening vision respecting the scope of grace, we may justly query whether they were not at some points too narrow in their conceptions, and possibly too rigid and severe in the manner in which they enforced the doctrine. Yet for their definition of common grace and effectual calling, for their account of the relations of the Spirit to all true repentance and all saving faith, for their broad and sweet doctrine of sanctification and

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from God . . . the sacred fount or cause of sanctity and the leader of sanctification: in whom is revealed God the Father . . . and God the Son. Lucian, A. D. 300; We believe in the Holy Ghost, given for consolation and sanctification and perfection to those who believe. After the Nicene Council, Cyril of Jerusalem, A. D. 350: I believe in one Holy Ghost, the Advocate, who spake in the prophets. Epiphanius, A. D. 374: We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified: who spake by the prophets. A more extended formula is ascribed to Epiphanius: We believe in the Holy Ghost, who spake in the Law, and preached in the Prophets, and came down at Jordan: who speaks in apostles, and dwells in saints: and thus we believe in Him,—that there is a Spirit of God, a perfect Spirit, a Paraclete Spirit, uncreated, proceeding from the Father, and received from the Son, and believed. For other similar formularies, earlier and later, consult Pearson on the Creed, Appendix: also, Smeaton, Doct. of the Holy Spirit: Div. Third.

Christian perfection so far as attainable in this life, and for their sturdy maintenance of the challenged truth of Christian assurance and perseverance unto the end, and their strong and lofty strains of hope for all believers in the life to come, to be realized at last through the ministries of the Spirit as truly as through the atoning mediation of the Son of God,—for all this they deserve, as indeed they have received, the grateful recognition of evangelical Christendom for these two centuries, and will doubtless continue more and more to receive it as the centuries increase.

3. Doctrine of the Spirit developed: proposed addition to the Confession.

It will involve no subtraction from this just estimate, if at this point we note the remarkable increase of interest in the general doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and the broader and still more inspiring conceptions of his person and his work, which already are among the most impressive theological and practical developments of the present age. It has been said that this cardinal doctrine like the doctrine of the Christian Church, is one among the undeveloped tenets of our holy faith. It is certainly a fact that, with the possible exception of the brief articles (XII) in the Scotch and Genevan Confessions, and the briefer statements in the Belgic Confession (XI) and the Thirty-Nine Articles (V), no creed of Christendom, Roman or Protestant, contains what may be regarded as a formal or adequate embodiment of this doctrine. We search in vain for any such statement in the formularies of Lutheranism, or in the Canons of Trent, or the Decrees of the Vatican. It is remarkable that the Confession of the Greek Church (Quest. IX–X: also, LXXII–LXXXI) contains what is perhaps the most extensive, if not wholly orthodox, account in Christian symbolism of the person of the Spirit, the seven gifts bestowed by him on believers, and the nine special fruits that spring up within the soul under his nurture. But evangelical Protestantism is coming more and more to realize that some more formal, adequate, inspiring statement than has thus far been framed, is becoming essential to that enlarged spiritual life, and that wider and more fruitful religious activity, which evangelical minds are everywhere recognizing as the chief desideratum of the church in our time.

It is this developing conviction which has given such significance to the recent movement to incorporate in the Confession a separate Chapter, which should bring together in one comprehensive statement the essential elements of current Christian belief in regard to the person of the Spirit, his several spheres and the general range of his agency, and his vital relations to the life of believers

and of the Church. Although this Chapter as proposed failed to receive that extensive measure of endorsement required under our Constitution, in order to effect any change in our ecclesiastical formulas, there is little doubt that it expresses, more fully than has been done heretofore in confessional form, what is the deep and growing conviction of a large majority of intelligent and earnest minds within our branch of the Presbyterian family, if not indeed in much broader circles. This Chapter may therefore fitly be incorporated in the present discussion, and is as follows:

I. The Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, the same in substance with the Father and the Son, and equal in power and glory, is, together with the Father and the Son, to be believed in, loved, obeyed, and worshiped throughout all ages.

II. The Holy Spirit who of old revealed to men in various ways the mind and will of God, hath fully and authoritatively made known this mind and will, in all things pertaining to life and salvation, in the sacred Scriptures,—holy men of God speaking therein as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and these Scriptures, being so inspired, are the infallible Word of God, the supreme rule of faith and duty.

III. The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, is everywhere present among men, confirming the teachings of nature and the law of God written on the heart, restraining from evil, inciting to good, and preparing the way for the Gospel. He likewise accompanies the Gospel with his persuasive energy, and urges its message upon the reason and conscience of unregenerate men, so that they who reject its merciful offer are not only without excuse, but are also guilty of resisting the Holy Spirit.

IV. The Holy Spirit is the only efficient agent in applying and communicating redemption. He effectually calls sinners to new life in Christ Jesus, regenerating them by his almighty grace and persuading and enabling them to embrace Jesus Christ by faith. He dwells in all believers as their Comforter and Sanctifier, and as the Spirit of adoption and of supplication, performing all those gracious offices by which they are sanctified and sealed unto the day of redemption.

V. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers are vitally united to Christ, who is the head, and are thus united to one another in the Church, which is his body. He calls and anoints ministers for their holy office, qualifies all other officers in the Church for their special work, and imparts various gifts and graces to its members. He gives efficacy to the Word and to the

ordinances of the Gospel. By him the Church will be preserved, increased and purified, until it shall cover the earth, and at last be made a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

The scope and significance of this historic declaration will appear more fully in our more specific investigations, but we may here pause to note some characteristic features of the statement. And first: its full recognition, not only of the true and proper divinity of the Holy Spirit, but also of his sovereign right to be believed, loved, obeyed and worshiped, together with the Father and the Son, by believers and by the Church catholic and universal.—Second: its closer and clearer analysis of the four spheres within which the particular work of the Spirit is carried forward,—the sphere of inspiration, as concerned with Holy Scripture in its supreme relationship to life and salvation,—the sphere of illumination, as related to the spiritual education of the race,—the sphere of regeneration, with its precious consequences and fruitage in the life of saints,—and the sphere of administration, as seen in the organization, guidance, development and efficiency of the Church.—Third: the broadened conception especially of his energy in influencing the moral life of mankind, and the moral order of the world, even beyond the geographic bounds of Christendom. What is described as common grace, or common operations of the Spirit (X:iv), is here presented as cosmic or universal among men, working everywhere in conjunction with the natural reason and conscience of the race.—And fourth: the more full and detailed account of the several ministries of the Spirit to the individual soul, ranging from the first effectual call of grace onward to final and complete sanctification, and also of his varied activities within the Church, selecting and endowing its officers, giving efficacy to its plans and endeavors, vitalizing its ordinances by his presence, empowering its missionary enterprises, and meanwhile perfecting the Church inwardly, so that it is graciously qualified more and more to become, according to the divine purpose, the dominating Kingdom of God on the earth.

Similar references, especially to the illuminating and regenerative operations of the Spirit in the world, appear in the recent Declaratory Acts of both the Free and the United Presbyterian Churches of Scotland. The English Presbyterian Synod has incorporated in its recent statement of belief a brief Article on the Holy Spirit, as follows: We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of life, who worketh freely as he will, without whose quickening grace there is no salvation, whom the

Father never withholds from any who ask for Him, and we give thanks that He has in every age moved on the hearts of men; that He spake by the prophets; that through our exalted Savior He was sent forth in power to convict the world of sin, to enlighten the minds of men in the knowledge of Christ, and to persuade and enable them to obey the call of the Gospel; and that He abides with the Church, dwelling in every believer as the Spirit of truth, of holiness, and of comfort.

4. Special Agency in salvation: his activity central and dominant here.

Such is the Divine Person whose blessed office it is to take up and complete within the individual soul, within the church, and in human society, that mighty task of salvation, devised and instituted as a gracious plan by the wisdom and love of God the Father, and revealed and rendered possible through the mediation, the teaching and acts and atoning sacrifice of God the Son. And this is the sublime sphere within which the Symbols generally represent him as working. We are not warranted by them in describing the Spirit as the executive of the Godhead in any generic sense, ruling in creation and providence as in the superior domain of grace:—the source of all intellectual life and ordinary knowledge in man, and revealing himself in animal and vegetable structures and growth. Such misconceptions rest apparently on the hypothesis that wherever the word, Spirit, occurs in the Bible as applied to God, it is the third person in the Trinity rather than the first or second, or the composite Deity as spiritual, that is indicated. We may certainly find a sufficient corrective to this misconception in the words of our Lord to the woman of Samaria, God is a Spirit: and in the many instances in the Old Testament in which the phrase, Spirit of God, must be interpreted as the spiritual God—the complete Deity who is pure Spirit, as distinguished from matter in whatever form. There is little warrant if any for regarding the Holy Ghost as the executive of the Godhead in all spheres, according to the pantheistic phrase of Cyprian, *omnium viventium anima*: and there is also great danger in such a representation, if in any degree it turns our thoughts away from that grand and distinctive work of applying salvation to men, and actually saving them according to the divine plan, in which his holy personality makes itself so gloriously manifest.

But within this, which must ever be recognized as the supreme sphere of divine activity, so far at least as the human race are concerned, the Spirit and his work are always to be regarded as the culminating features. It was to the specific task of saving men

by the process devised by the Father and provided for in the incarnate Christ, Son of God and Son of man, that the Spirit was in biblical phrase sent forth from the Father, or—as the Symbols affirm—from the Father and the Son. They do not indeed enter at all into the mystery suggested by the term, procession: they say nothing of an interior and ineffable spiration, as it has been termed (Shedd, Dogm. Theol.), by which the Spirit flows forth eternally as a living effluence from the Father—a speculation analogous to that which is represented in the kindred dogma of an eternal begetting of the Son. Nor do they discuss the question whether this procession, or sending forth, was single or double—from the Father only, or from Father and Son as conjoined in commissioning the Spirit for his sacred task. But they are careful to guard against the inference that such commissioning, whether by one or two divine persons, involves any subordination or inferiority on the part of the third person who is thus sent and commissioned: they affirm rather full identity of substance, and entire equality in power and glory and in every attribute, such that the Spirit is absolutely and throughout as truly God as either the Son or the Father. Nor do they permit us to regard this work of human salvation as inferior, because it is consequent upon the preceding works of creation or providence, or redemption through the mediation of Christ. Rather is it true, if it may reverently be said, that they exhibit the work of the Spirit within this sphere as highest and grandest as well as last;—the most glorious and precious revelation which the triune Deity has ever made, or possibly may ever be able to make, of his nature or his will and love toward our fallen race.

But while in a sense limiting the operations of the Holy Spirit within this single sphere or department of divine activity, we should on the other hand recognize, as indeed the Confession does in large measure, how extensive and varied and sublime these operations are. We are there taught that the promises, prophecies, sacrifices and other types and ordinances, given to the chosen people of God, as foretokenings of a Savior to come, were delivered unto them (VII:5) through the operations of the Spirit. Scripture also tells us that he inspired artizans like Bezaleel in the preparation of the tabernacle and the robes of the anointed priesthood;—that he strengthened and endowed warriors and judges like Samson and Samuel for their specific tasks in the interest of the slowly developing economy of grace;—that he qualified great kings like David and Solomon, and quickened holy prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah and the rest, for their special commissions

as the messengers of God to the elect people, and as foretellers of that future that was to be realized in the advent and mission of Jesus Christ. We may recognize him also as the source of all holy living in individual men such as Elijah and David and Daniel, and as the active agent in those precious revivals of religion which —as in the age of Nehemiah—shed such peculiar luster on the spiritual experience and life of the Hebrew nation. And, if we turn to the New Testament, whatever may be thought of the mystical phrase in the most ancient creed, *Conceived by the Holy Ghost*, there can be no question that the Spirit descended like the semblance of a dove upon the incarnate Immanuel; that he wrought graciously upon men in conjunction with the ministries of Jesus; that he came down in mighty power upon the assembled saints at the Pentecost; and that he anointed, taught, guided, empowered the church in and throughout the unique experiences of the apostolic century. The attempt to interpret that century—the century of wonders—in a naturalistic way, as a mere conjunction of human forces and influences, the Holy Spirit not recognized as the dominating and formative agency, is wholly subversive of Scripture, as it must also prove destructive to true faith. We recognize him also as in a true sense the author of the Scriptures, both older and newer, as the safe guide of the Evangelists in their records of the life of Christ, as the inspirer of Paul and Peter and James and John, and any others who may have been associated with them under his direction in the preparation of the Book of books. And proceeding from this sure historic basis, we are warranted in believing further in a true and proper dispensation of the Spirit which, beginning with the Ascension and the Pentecost, has broadened in scope and increased in potency with the succeeding centuries, until now it may truly be said that the Spirit is wide as the world in his presence and working, and as efficient as he is gracious in his holy activities—in this high sense and sphere the glorious executive of the Godhead among men.

That such a doctrine of the Holy Spirit is as fundamental in Christianity as the doctrine of the incarnation or the atonement, is fully implied, if not formally stated in the Symbols. To the Socinian notion that the Spirit is merely an impersonal effluence from God or—in the language of the Augsburg Confession—a motion created in things, within the domain of religion; and indeed to all naturalistic conceptions concerning him or his working, they present a plain, positive and conclusive answer. Later times have indeed brought into view certain forms

5. Objections stated: the answer of Christianity.

of objection, to which the Symbols furnish no reply except by implication. It is said, for example, that the doctrine of such a superhuman personality, descending into the human spirit, and effecting such moral changes in thought and feeling and purpose as render him who experiences them essentially a new man—a saved man, both inwardly and in his relations to God and to eternity, has no philosophic basis, and is in fact an illusion of the Christian imagination. It is alleged that all such transformations as actually occur in life, however extensive or thorough, can be sufficiently accounted for by the action of the human judgment and conscience, and of the will inherent in man himself,—that in a word, the idea of regeneration and conversion, and of progressive sanctification wrought out by the power of God working immediately and decisively within the human soul, is entirely unwarranted, and in fact is pernicious as well as illusive, so far as it turns the thoughts of men away from that task of self-renovation, of moral development and perfection, which from the nature of the case must be wrought out through personal effort and culture alone.

It is further urged by way of objection that, since God has chosen to reveal himself and his will in nature and in the human mind and conscience, acting upon the human soul ab extra, it is unreasonable to suppose that the divine Spirit will thus enter into the inmost recesses of the human spirit, and there by such interior energy work out such changes as Christianity alleges. It is said that God cannot do such a work within as well as upon man,—at least, that he could not exert such sweeping and revolutionary energy as this, without limiting or even destroying that human freedom, that power of choice, which is not only the supreme prerogative of man, but also constitutes an indispensable element in salvation itself. It is also said that all the presumptions derived from human experience stand out in opposition to such a theory of salvation,—that we have no evidence of any analogous action of Deity in other spheres of human experience,—that the presence of such a supernatural power within the soul has not been, cannot be, recognized in consciousness,—and that Christianity by its affirmations at this point, its claim of supernaturalness here and elsewhere, shows conclusively that it is not a reasonable faith, but is rather an unwarrantable and mischievous delusion.

In reply to all such objections it is at once admitted that our holy religion stands or falls on this doctrine of the Holy Ghost as the initial and the supreme agent in the process of human salvation:

everything in Christianity as an experience and a life hangs in fact on this cardinal tenet. In support of this claim we may at the outset as a matter of simple observation adduce the fact that the human race, left to the action of its own impaired moral powers, does not spontaneously turn away from sin, or seek successfully that life of holiness and virtue which still is ever hanging out before it as a bright and attractive ideal. There is certainly no greater delusion—no hypothesis more overwhelmingly controverted by fact, than that in and of himself man will ever work out such a spiritual renovation as he is conscious of needing. It is also obvious that no disclosures made by God in nature or in the mind and conscience of man, no ministries of providence or commands or persuasives embodied in his moral government, do in fact produce, or seem competent in themselves to produce, that spiritual renewal, which man knows that he requires in order to be truly saved. It is even obvious that the revelation of God in the incarnate Christ, the words and acts and holy example of the Immanuel, with all the powerful persuasives embodied in them, are not saving men, and seem even powerless without some further interposition, to save them from their sin. Before the Gospel and the Cross humanity still lies corrupt, helpless, unsaved; and this in spite of all that human philosophy or human culture or even divine providence has ever been able to say or to do toward its spiritual restoration.

Just here it is, in the consummating doctrine of the Holy Ghost as now defined, that Christianity proves alike its divine origin and its transcendent mission to our fallen race. It claims that there is no philosophic basis for the affirmation that God cannot work within the soul as well as upon it from without, or for the assumption that he cannot do this without destroying or seriously impairing human freedom. It further claims that the fact that God ordinarily influences men by one class of agencies or one type of method, does not in the least preclude him from choosing other varieties of method or agency, whenever he finds them essential to the securing of his elect purposes. It claims still further that the fact of human sinfulness, and moral helplessness instead of forbidding such change of divine activity, furnishes the strongest reason why God by his Spirit should enter into the very soul of man, and should there in the centers of our being work out such a spiritual transformation as he demands in order to our restoration to harmony and fellowship with himself. That these claims, with all that they imply, are reasonable and worthy of human credence, no sound or deep philosophy will ever deny. Yet the ultimate appeal

of Christianity is not to philosophic speculation but to palpable and abundant and unquestionable fact. The evidence of consciousness, the witness of millions of believers, the sincere and earnest confession of the Church verified by incidents innumerable, all combine to show that what cannot be accomplished in any other way is actually accomplished through the Holy Spirit as not only revealed in Scripture, but verified in the lives of sanctified men. What Socrates dreamed of in his attendant and guiding *daimon*, the Christian may and does realize in the Holy Ghost, as such an indwelling, guiding, purifying energy descending upon him directly from the skies. He may indeed be unable to discern the presence of that divine agent in his consciousness as a distinguishable power: but he may by indubitable signs discover the presence and efficiency of that supernatural visitant, in those radical changes of thought and feeling and purpose, in those upspringing graces and virtues, in those victories over sin, in that blessed sense of oneness with God in Christ, and of pardon and peace and life everlasting, which consciousness and experience tell him could never have come to him in and of himself. And what the individual soul thus comes to see and to know, our degenerate humanity is beginning to apprehend, and in some vague measure to appreciate,—the Holy Ghost as, in the words of Nicaea, Lord and Giver of Life to our fallen race. Nor can any form of human speculation ever prove this culminating truth of our Holy Faith a falsehood or an illusion: on this supernatural foundation our Christianity may securely stand.

6. The human person in this process: Man as salvable.

What has already been said respecting the moral state and moral capabilities of the human person concerned in this process of salvation, need not be repeated here. It is admitted that the language employed in the Symbols, and in some other Protestant formularies, to describe the moral disability of the sinner, his practical deadness to spiritual truth and spiritual appeals, has sometimes been carried so far as well-nigh to obliterate in theory the human factor in that remarkable process. This liability is also increased by the very strong terms used to set forth the sovereignty and absolute supremacy of the Spirit at every stage in that process. That the sinful person is in a state properly described as one of corruption or of death,—utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good,—wholly inclined to evil, defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body; and that this pravity, both original and cultivated through transgression, is total in

the sense that the man left to himself will never throw off this spiritual deadness, and is universal in the sense that it is an indwelling characteristic of our humanity—a pravity which nothing but an initial and sovereign impact of the Spirit of God can ever remove;—all this may and must be affirmed in substance by those who would effectually proclaim the Gospel to our fallen race. Yet it is to be thoughtfully remembered that the corruption so impressively described in our Symbols in language that startles us by its intensity, is expressly limited by them to the things that accompany salvation—to spiritual good, in this special and supreme significance. These phrases do not imply that the sinner does not possess reason and conscience and free will in a true sense, or that the process of salvation is one in which he is to be absolutely passive—as passive as the clay whirled into form by the wheel and hand of the potter. Man though sinful still remains a salvable person; conscious, moral, accountable before God not merely for his natural estate, but far more for his disposition and choice under the offers of the Gospel and the ministries of the Holy Ghost. As it is a person who atones, and a person who regenerates, it is also a person—a living person, not a dead thing —for whom atonement is provided, and on whom the Spirit regeneratively works.

We find ourselves involved here in the old and sad controversy which, ever since the earlier stages of the Reformation, has been waged within the general domain of Protestantism, often with most disastrous results to religion as well as to theology. The sweeping affirmations of Luther respecting the corruption and deadness of the sinner brought out by natural antithesis the synergistic dogma of Melanchthon respecting the three concurrent causes of good action, the Word and the Spirit of God and the will of man. In like manner the strenuous argumentation of Calvin brought out its vigorous antithesis in the dogma of Arminius and his associates as to the ability and consequent responsibility of the sinner in view of the offers made to him in the inspired Word, and pressed upon him by the Holy Spirit. Yet Melanchthon was never willing to affirm that, while the will of man is a concurrent cause in some degree, it is also in any sense a primary or a cöequal cause in securing our salvation. And in like manner the Remonstrantia could not refrain from admitting (Art. IV) that the grace of God is the beginning, continuance and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and cöoperative grace, can neither think, will nor do

good, . . . so that all good deeds or movements must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. In other words, the original Remonstrants confessed the indispensable necessity for such a work as that of the Spirit in human regeneration and the primariness of his action, and so far forth stood substantially on common ground with the divines of Dort, while they felt themselves constrained to resist that exaggerated view of his work which the high Calvinism of their day had embodied in the old Augustinian phrase, gratia irresistibilis. And it is noticeable that the Articles of Religion, drawn up originally by Wesley himself for American Methodism, while standing out in contrast with the current Calvinism of his day at certain points, expressly affirm, (VII) that man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually: and further (VIII) that while in this condition, he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and works to faith and calling upon God, and needs the grace of God by Christ preventing or going before him, in order that he may have a good will, and working within him when he has gained that good will through divine grace.

These historic illustrations may at least suffice to show us that evangelical Protestantism is substantially agreed in recognizing the grand underlying fact, that the work of the Holy Spirit in the process of salvation is throughout a work in and upon a person—a person indeed corrupted and even dead in trespasses and sins, yet invested with moral faculties, reason and conscience and a free and responsible power of choice, and by virtue of such investment salvable. It is practically agreed by all divisions of Protestantism that the possession of such endowments does not render the human person worthy of salvation, or that if left to their natural action he will ever bring himself into a saved state, or so prepare or qualify himself that the Spirit may recognize in him a meritorious subject of salvation. It is practically agreed also that salvation comes by and with the Word, brought home through the energies of the Holy Spirit, and that together with the Word he works within the soul as really as upon it, so quickening the intellect and vitalizing the conscience and moving upon the will itself that the man is, in the phrase of the Catechism, (31) *persuaded and enabled* to accept Jesus Christ, freely offered to him in the Gospel. In a word, evangelical Protestantism is substantially agreed that the sinner is a living person, and that as sin is always personal, however embedded in the nature, so salvation is a personal process throughout,—the Holy Ghost enlightening, convincing, renewing, enabling, with initial love and power, and the

man under his influence answering the gracious call, and responsively accepting and embracing the divine offer made to him in and through the mediation of the Immanuel. And while our Symbols are among the foremost in their strenuous emphasizing of the sovereignty as well as the tenderness of the Spirit, his primal choice and energy everywhere so going before any thought or purpose of man that salvation is properly ascribed to him as his work more than that of man,—they cannot justly be charged, notwithstanding all their strong language respecting the desperate state of the sinner, with the denial or even the ignoring of this great antithetic truth. There may be adherents and defenders of the Symbols who go to such lengths as almost to inculcate a species of Christian fatalism, or at least to minimize disastrously the fundamental doctrine of freedom and responsibility for the neglect or misuse of the salvation offered to all in the Gospel. But the formularies themselves, though written under the inspiration of an ardent and strenuous Calvinism, cannot in fairness be held accountable for such misconception or exaggeration of their real teaching.

Holding therefore before our minds this generic conception of salvation as a process wrought by a divine person within and upon human persons, we find ourselves confronted further with the interesting question respecting the extent and scope of this divine operation. It is clear that the churches of the Reformation were accustomed to contemplate the work of the Spirit as wrought entirely within the geographic domain of Christendom, and for the most part within the narrower domain of Protestantism exclusively.—The creeds furnish hardly a hint of any gracious activity exerting itself more extensively, as if the mission of the Spirit, like that of Christ, was a mission to the race. We have indeed the wide declaration (X:iii–iv) that he *worketh when and where and how he pleaseth*, as in the case of elect infants, and of other elect persons who may be incapable of being, as the phrase is, outwardly called by the ministry of the Word. A similar expression appears in the Augsburg Confession (Art. V): By the Word and Sacraments, as by instruments, the Holy Spirit is given who worketh faith where and how (ubi et quando), it pleaseth God. But the subjects of such special and mystical operations clearly were to be found within the circles of Protestant belief and organization, and there only: this is indicated by the phrases, *outward call*, and *ministry of the Word*, which could have signifi-

7 Common operations of the Spirit: common grace.

cance only within the domain of Christendom, if not of Protestantism alone. Concerning the heathen world, or the adherents of false religions, such as Mohammedanism, or of corrupted Christianity such as appeared in the Greek church or the Romanism of that era, nothing distinctively was affirmed, either in the Symbols or any in other Protestant creed. The outward call was the call of the revealed and published Word: and the only recognized ministry of that Word was the Protestant ministry, as ordained in the several communions. The church, according to the definition of Augsburg (Art. VII) was the congregation of saints, the assembly of believers, in which the Gospel is rightly taught, and the sacraments are rightly administered: and outside of that church, with its holy teaching and ordinances there was, as the Reformers generally believed, little more than a possibility of salvation.

Yet, as we have already noted, there were Protestant theologians who cherished the conviction that the educational and purifying ministries of the Spirit extended beyond the boundaries of Christendom, and that there might be what has been termed an unconscious Christianity among worthier members of the pagan portion of the race. Augustine had affirmed (Civ. Dei. XVIII) that before Christian times there were, outside of the Israelite race, men who lived according to God and pleased him, and therefore belonged, as he said, to the fellowship of the heavenly city. Zwingli held that as the saints of the Hebraic dispensation had been saved through the efficacious work and sacrifice of a Messiah whom they had known only in promises and in shadowy outline, so there were good and pure men among the heathen, (some of whom he designated), who were more likely—as he said—to be saved than many a pope. Some Protestant divines, such as Zanchins in the latter part of the sixteenth century and Wittsins in the century following, maintained that there was a revealing Logos among men even prior to the incarnation,—that all spiritual truth in whatever form proceeds from the Spirit of God, and is made known by him to the world,—and that under his nurture one might become a true believer and be graciously saved, who had never known the story of the life and teaching and death of Jesus Christ. It is possible, though not certain, that the Second Helvetic Confession contemplated the case of the heathen in its affirmation that God may enlighten some men in any way (quos et quando), he pleases without the outward ministry of the Word, though his usual method of instruction be through the Word. Luther, indeed and most of the Reformers, Calvin included, regarded such a hope as inadmissible and held that it made void the

entire Gospel. It is only as we come down to our own century, that the broader view is found to have any large degree of currency, and by many in Protestant circles that view is still regarded as a pleasant or a dangerous hypothesis rather than an established truth. That many a pope, especially such as sat in the seat of Peter in the days when Zwingli lived and preached and suffered, will not be found in heaven, may reasonably be anticipated: that Socrates and Plato, Cato and Seneca, and others whom Zwingli named, are among the residents of that blessed abode, we cannot affirm, neither can we with authority deny.

Still it has come to be a widely cherished belief that whether there are, in the language of the Swiss divine, elect among the Gentiles, there assuredly are cosmic energies of the Spirit at work which reach far beyond the limits of present Christendom, restraining mankind from the evil to which by nature they are prone, working upon the natural reason and conscience in the interest of truth and virtue, preserving society from moral decay, sustaining good laws and governments, and everywhere preparing the race, often by prolonged and impressive disciplines, for the recognition and acceptance of Christ as its Redeemer. The chapter on the Holy Spirit, proposed as an addition to the Confession, affirms that the Spirit as the Lord and Giver of spiritual life is thus everywhere present among men, confirming the teachings of nature and the law of God written on the heart, and maintaining, in conjunction with the providential administration of God the Father, the moral order of the world in the interest ultimately of the salvation which the world is to receive through the Gospel. The Free Church Declaration conveys the same doctrine in the statement that God may by his Spirit extend his mercy, as may seem good to him, to those who are beyond the ordinary means of grace. A similar view is at least suggested by the statement of English Presbyterianism in the Article on the Spirit already quoted.

This generic or cosmic ministry of the Spirit must be viewed, not simply as another form of divine providence, but rather as a superadded bestowment—as truly such as the incarnation and mediation of God the Son, and for the same gracious purpose. It is indeed hardly scriptural, as we have seen, to set the Spirit forth as the teacher of men in the ordinary departments of human knowledge or science, and still more questionable to speak of him as the intelligent principle in animal life or the vitalizing force in the vegetable kingdom. Such conceptions inevitably degrade or impair that sublime view of him as Lord and Giver of spiritual

life distinctively, which the Scriptures do clearly suggest, and which constitutes him for all time the glorious Teacher, Comforter, Paraclete of the race. It is within the spiritual sphere alone that he thus manifests his gracious energies,—as the ancient creed obviously implied.

In conformity with this belief an interesting statement, once approved by the Assembly (Minutes, 369) but not incorporated in the Symbols, declares that, besides much forbearance and many supplies which all mankind receive from Christ as Lord of all, they are by him made capable of receiving salvation tendered to them by the Gospel, and are under such dispensations of providence and operations of the Spirit as lead to repentance. Common grace, gratia communis, is thus to be recognized as one of the grand underlying facts in the scheme of salvation. These common or generic operations of the Spirit, as described in the Confession, constitute an important, even indispensable element in the Gospel. Augustine styled this the gratia praeveniens, a potency of the Spirit going before conversion, and experienced even by multitudes who, though they have heard the outward call of the Word, do not yield to that grace, and therefore are not saved. He indeed limited that prevenient grace under the Gospel only to those who had personally heard this external call, but we with wider vision, may justly regard it as going before the Gospel in a much larger sense, preparing the world to receive Christ in his redemptive efficiency just as the Father in his providence prepared the world for the advent of its Redeemer. We may believe that there is in fact no continent where the Holy Spirit is not thus working,—no tribe or nation to which he is not now ministering in the interest of its illumination and ultimate restoration. Nor is there any time, we are assured, when he ceases in his gracious operations: he is as tireless in the broad field of grace as the Father is in the field of nature and providence. His ministry began even before there was a written Word, and now reaches far beyond the regions where the printed Word has been carried. Wherever Christ is in all the earth, there the Spirit is: whatever Christ is doing for our humanity, the Spirit is also doing; not only reproving or convincing the world—as our Lord said—of sin and righteousness and judgment, but also tenderly drawing convicted souls unto Christ as their true and only Savior. And when we thus discern him in all the glorious comprehensiveness of his educational and convicting work, we may well say with Luther, though with a far broader and loftier view than he had attained: The grace of God is a kind of thing very great and strong, powerful and active: it does not lie down sleeping

in the soul, as some of these fanatic preachers dream, nor is it carried about as a painted board carries its colors. No, by no means: it is that grace which carries, and drives, and operates and works everything in man.

Without dwelling upon the operation and effects of such common and prevenient grace in the case of the multitudes in Christian lands who hear the outward call, and yet willfully reject it. (Hodge, Theol. II:670) we may now turn to the contemplation of the converting or regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, as described in Chapter X, under the title of *Effectual Calling*. A dark problem already adverted to here again presents itself in the fact that this wide preparatory ministry of the Spirit is so often ineffectual and fruitless—ineffectual and fruitless at least so far as those whom it reaches are not all, or at present even a majority, actually saved by it. There is indeed a providential mystery here, like that which comes to view in the wondrous contrast between the profuse blossoming of springtime and the actual fruitage of autumn—like that which appears at a thousand other points between what seem to be the purposes of God in nature or within the sphere of humanity, and the practical outcome in the world or in human life. We are confronted with substantially the same mystery when we contemplate the cosmic capabilities of the mediation of Christ, the free provisions of the Gospel, the universal offers and invitations on one hand, and the relatively small number of those whom God actually justifies and redeems—a number pitifully small when contrasted with the vast multitude who continue to walk in the broad roadways of sin and destruction. Nor is the mystery wholly removed when we turn for an explanation to that strange blindness and wickedness of the human heart, which lead it so often to resist alike the atoning love of Christ and the gentle persuasions of the Holy Ghost, and which sometimes seem to endow the sinner with a baleful energy more potential even than the will and purpose of God. The culpability of those who willfully neglect and reject these common operations of the Spirit, and who for this cause are justly left in their unbelief, was strongly maintained in the Assembly: Minutes, 370. But beyond this, which is the human side of the mystery only, we must recognize a divine sovereignty such as our Lord himself suggested in the metaphor of the wind blowing where it listeth, so that while we may hear the sound thereof, we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. Doubtless there are great and solemn ends

8. Effectual Calling: regeneration by the Spirit: Conversion.

subserved by such generic operations of the Spirit, viewed as one part or feature in the sublime scheme of redemption, which amply justify them to the divine Mind, however inexplicable they may be to ours. The reverent recognition of such sovereignty, exalting the work of the Spirit like that of the Son or of the Father infinitely above our control or even our cognition, and an humble joy in that work and acceptance of it just as we find it, in the assurance of its perfect wisdom and righteousness and love, are our final duty, as well as our blessed privilege in the case.

The phrase, *effectual call*, set in contrast with the preceding phrase, *common operations*, is hardly to be taken as implying that there are two distinct kinds of grace, since the only distinction of which we can know anything is that which appears in the result. The effectual call is simply that operation of the Spirit which results in conversion and is the beginning of salvation viewed as an interior process. It is admirably defined in the Shorter Catechism (31) as that work of the Spirit whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he *doth persuade and enable us* to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the Gospel. The Larger Catechism further describes this work (67) as a manifestation of *almighty power and grace;* declares that it springs *from the special love of God to his elect*, nothing in them moving him thereunto; points to *an accepted time* which is divinely determined, and by various phrases sets forth somewhat more specifically the process of enlightenment and renewal and persuasion by which men are made both willing and able to answer the divine call, and to embrace the grace thus offered. The Confession goes still farther into details, chiefly for the purpose of emphasizing the sovereign primacy of the Spirit on one hand and the passivity and deadness of man on the other—carrying the contrast out so far as almost to create the impression that the sinner is in a sense coerced and made willing even against his will, through the almighty energies of grace. Of the clearness and comprehensiveness, the philosophic accuracy and the biblical quality of the definition, taken in the aggregate, too much can hardly be said.

Here again we may recognize the high vantage on which the Westminster divines stood, in comparison with the compilers of antecedent symbolism. This effectual call is indeed set forth as a fundamental article of belief in nearly all the Protestant creeds, from the Confession of Augsburg and the Catechism of Luther down to the Canons of Dort, though in general it is comparatively less prominent than the associated doctrine of an external or legal

justification procured for man through the mediation of Christ. Under the image of regeneration, being born again through the Spirit, it appears continually in these formularies as one essential feature in true salvation. It appears also in the exposition of good works, good works in the scriptural rather than the ecclesiastical sense, as produced in us by the Spirit, and as signs of our regeneration and acceptance with God. Zwingli, notwithstanding his divergent tendency, agrees in his Articles with Luther in emphasizing the cardinal truth taught them by Christ and the Spirit: Ye must be born again. For later illustrations we may note the Second Helv. Conf. Cap, IX–XIV: the Belgic Conf. XXIV: the Thirty-Nine Articles (X) on free will and the preventing grace of God; the Canons of Dort, First Head. Art. VII: and specially the Scotch Conf. Art. XII, Of Faith in the Holy Goste. In a word, the doctrine of regeneration, or of the effectual call and movement of the Spirit upon and within the soul, antecedent to all spiritual life or experience on the part of man runs, like the kindred doctrine of justification by faith in Christ only, through Protestant symbolism everywhere as a cardinal feature in that Gospel of grace which it was the mission of the Reformation to bring anew into the comprehension and acceptance of men.

But it was the high privilege of the Westminster Assembly to analyze the doctrine, to indicate and adjust its various elements, to exhibit it in its biblical comprehensiveness and preciousness, more completely than had been done by their predecessors, either Continental or British. The Irish Articles came nearest, and doubtless furnished here as elsewhere the germs of the complete statement as given in the Symbols. In this statement we may note the following steps or stages in the saving process; first, the conviction of both sin and misery, produced in the mind and enforced upon the conscience, prostrating the soul, and impelling it to seek deliverance and purification; second, the disclosure to the convicted soul of Christ in his mediatorial offices, and of redemption made possible through his grace even to the chief of sinners; third, the quickening of the moral nature, the reason and conscience, so that the soul is enabled to discern and to appreciate and desire the redemption thus made known; fourth, the vitalizing and energizing of the will, impaired and deadened through the influence of sin, until its desires are changed into aspirations, and the man thus vitalized is empowered to choose for himself this offered salvation: and fifth, the personal persuasion to such a choice by all those subtle and tender influences which such a person as the Spirit of God can bring to bear—such advising,

counselling, entreating, moving, drawing, prevailing upon, as he may fitly use in his immediate contact and communion with the convicted, enlightened, quickened and empowered soul, in order to its spiritual restoration.

Such in brief is the act of the Spirit in human regeneration. It is a complex, a radical and profound, a revolutionary and reconstructive process, whereby not the will or the purposes alone, but the whole man in his intellect and moral sensibilities and conscience as truly as in his power of choice, is transformed and renewed throughout—is, as to all the elements of character, made a new man. It is not strange that Scripture should describe such a process as a second birth, a passage from darkness into light, another life expelling the natural life forever from the breast, a putting off the old man and putting on the new man or the new manhood, with consequent changes at every point in life and action. The abundance and strength of such imagery show how radical and comprehensive this renewal is, in the estimate of the Spirit who produces it, and how essential to human salvation such a change in the moral constitution must be. Such regeneration penetrates every part and element in our spiritual nature, leaving nothing in the soul unreached or unchanged by its efficiency: it is a renovation of the whole man in every feature of character, in every impulse, desire, choice and act of the life.

Perhaps the most impressive description of regeneration to be found in Protestant symbolism appears in the Third Canon of Dort, Art. XI–XII: When God accomplishes his pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, he not only causes the Gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by his Holy Spirit . . . but also by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit pervades the inmost recesses of man, opens the closed and softens the hardened heart: . . . infuses new qualities into the will which, though heretofore dead, he quickens; and from being evil, disobedient and refractory, renders it good, obedient and pliable; and so actuates and strengthens it that, like a good tree, it is enabled to bring forth the fruits of good action. This—it is added—is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture, and denominated a new creation, a resurrection from the dead, which God without our aid produces in us; evidently a supernatural work, most powerful and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious and ineffable; not less or inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead.

The human response to this regenerative work of the Holy Ghost is fitly expressed in the term, Conversion, as employed in

this Canon. It is sometimes said that the Spirit converts, or that one person converts another; but more strictly speaking, conversion is the first responsive act of the soul itself, when thus convinced, enlightened, energized and persuaded by the Spirit of God. It is not to be said that the sinner converts himself, by virtue of any independent energies resident in his spiritual nature: nor are we to suppose that after the Spirit has done his regenerative work, the man of his own motion deliberately and without divine help accepts or embraces Jesus Christ offered to him in the Gospel. It is nearer the truth to say, with the Larger Catechism, that this divine agent makes the sinner willing, enables him to take the decisive step, so that the man acts *most freely* because he is thus graciously wrought upon in the very instant and act of conversion, as in the experience that may precede his conversion. While it is not true that the Spirit makes the decisive choice, elects salvation in the stead of the sinner, in any such sense that the conversion becomes his act, and the sinner is saved as by some gracious constraint and without any concurrent will or election on his own part, still the Spirit is in and with the soul in utmost graciousness and power as it is making such election—just as he maketh intercession within as well as for the believer, prays in him while he is bowed and suppliant in the sacred mystery of prayer. Regeneration and conversion are thus not two independent acts, one human, the other divine; the divine preceding and the human following in a certain chronologic order, and with possible intervals of time between them. It is nearer the truth to conceive of them as one act in which both agents are conjoined; the divine always primal, competent, efficient, and supreme in sovereignty as in love and power; the human ever consequent, persuaded, drawn, enabled, yet ever free in its acceptation of the offered grace.

It has been charged with some justice that the Symbols in their supreme purpose to extol the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in this salvatory process, have too much ignored the responsibility and activity of man in the matter of his own conversion. Similar charges have been made, with even greater force, against some others among the Protestant creeds, because they assert, in language transmitted from one to another, that man is *altogether passive* in the matter of his effectual calling and his consequent salvation. The Scotch Confession (XII) for example, declares that we are so dead, so blind and so perverse, that neither can we feel when we are pricked, see the light when it shines, nor assent to the will of God when it is revealed, until the Spirit of the Lord

Jesus quicken that which is dead, remove the darkness from our minds, and bow our hearts to the obedience of his blessed will. The Second Helvetic, the French and the Belgic Confessions, and the Canons of Dort, (first and third general Heads) might be quoted in further illustration of the tendency to emphasize, in opposition to all Pelagian conceptions, the utter passivity of man in the reception of saving grace. But it should be said in explanation that it is regeneration chiefly, rather than conversion, of which these formularies are speaking in such strong terms, though they do not in general make sufficient distinction between what is divine and what is human in the saving process. It is true forevermore that what the Spirit does, he does in initial and independent sovereignty, and that so far forth man is altogether passive,—simply wrought upon by regenerative energy: nothing that he ever will do or can do, left to himself, will regenerate him or make of him a new man in Christ Jesus. Yet if, in conjunction with this profound and thoroughly biblical affirmation, the creeds and those who framed them had recognized the antithetic truth which Melancthon sought to express in his unfortunate phrase, the concurrent will of man, it is unquestionable that the doctrine of sovereign as well as gracious regeneration would have been more readily received, and that the call of the church to all men to be converted and saved through the Gospel would have had larger currency and much more precious effect. The statement of Dickson (Truth's Victory over Error) is worthy of consideration here: When I say a man is passive in his conversion, I do not think that he is physically passive, as a stock or a stone when an artist is about to make a statue of them; but morally, or rather spiritually:—language which locates the deadness where it really belongs, in the moral disposition.

9. The Truth as an instrument: other instrumentalities.

One further question remains to be considered in this connection —the interesting question respecting the relations of the truth, the sacraments, and other ordained means of grace to regeneration and conversion viewed as spiritual experiences. It has already been seen that in the case of infants and youth who have not come into intelligent consciousness, and of adults born into imbecility of mind, the regenerative work must go on independently of truth consciously apprehended, and by methods known to the Holy Spirit only. So in the case of heathen to whom the Gospel has not been proclaimed, the truth used by the Spirit in regeneration, so far as regeneration may occur in such cases, must be what the

law of nature and the divine law stamped on the heart and conscience have supplied. But beyond these exceptional cases, regeneration may be regarded as always occurring in conjunction with what may be termed evangelical or saving truth. In the exigencies of theologic controversy it has been affirmed that the Spirit may and does regenerate adult minds in gospel lands without using such truth as his instrument,—that such persons may be born anew while asleep or while engaged in their ordinary avocations, they being at the time wholly unconscious of the saving process going on within them. But such affirmations are from the nature of the case incapable of verification, if in fact they ever occur: it might further be shown that they are quite at variance with the teachings both of Scripture and of nearly all evangelical symbolism. By the Word and by the Spirit, is the universal formula of the Protestant creeds. By the Spirit taking the truth concerning God and man and salvation, and pressing it home upon the reason and conscience,—by the Spirit enlightening, convicting, persuading, using the truths of the Gospel as his instrument and through them working upon the soul from without, while he is also pouring his own vitalizing energies into it at the very centers of its moral being,—by the Spirit thus operating in and with the Word, is the unvarying formula of the Scriptures. It is not needful to suppose that in every instance the saving truth thus used is recognizable by the intellect at the moment: cases are not wanting in which such truth has been flowing into consciousness for long periods, or is recalled to the conscience long after it had once been seen by the reason, but in some blessed hour is brought again into the range of the moral vision, convincing and convicting the sinner, and through the endowing persuasives and influence of the Spirit as an agent, turning him away from sin to duty and to God.

There is indeed an intrinsic potency in the cardinal truths of our holy religion, which enables them of themselves to interest, to convince, to command and subdue those who candidly hear and appreciate them, and on which those who proclaim these truths may always rely in happy assurance. While they sometimes appear to the wise and noble as foolishness, and are sometimes despised by the wisdom of this world and its representatives, they are still the wisdom of God and the power of God,—intrinsically mighty to the pulling down of strongholds, and to the awakening and salvation of men. The blessed doctrines of our faith are not trivialities, void of power to educate or to persuade. They are, rather, potential verities which have stood the tests of ages and

the severest storms of criticism and unbelief, and are steadily growing in the acceptation of mankind because of their demonstrated truthfulness and value. As all men know, it was this intrinsic potency of evangelical truth on which Luther and his compeers and disciples relied, as really as on the aid of the Holy Spirit, in their fierce battles with papal error. The Bible as a true book, a book full of clear, strong, commanding and saving truth, infinitely above the testimonies of tradition and the teachings of the church and her priesthood,—this was the foundation alike of their individual belief, and of their assurance of success in their severe conflict. A kindred conviction that the truth revealed by the Spirit in the Scriptures has inherent, if not irresistible, efficacy in the moral renovation of the race, stood at the basis of all the teachings of Calvin, and of those who followed him in the Reformed churches. Our doctrine, he said in the Dedication of his Institutes to his most Christian Majesty, Francis, the French king, must stand exalted above all the glory and invincible by all the powers of the world, because it is not ours, but the doctrine of the living God, and of his Christ. The Westminster divines were possessed by this conviction: they believed past all questioning in the magnitude, the value, the spiritual potency of the system of truth which they had derived from the Bible and which they confidently presented to the inhabitants of the British Isles, and indeed to all Christendom, as the mighty and precious instrument whereby the regenerating Spirit illuminates and saves.

But when to such intrinsic potency there is added the personality of that Spirit, and the inward impact and influence of his inflowing and indwelling grace within the soul of the hearer, how much more mighty and more difficult to resist does that truth become! It is then indeed the strongest of all conceivable spiritual forces, more effective in its call than all the deductions of reason or of human philosophy, and infinitely more competent not only to convince and persuade, but also to save a blinded, skeptical, perishing world. Such is the continuous witness of the New Testament as well as of Protestant symbolism to the power of Gospel truth when wielded by the Holy Spirit, and they are indeed incompetent and unworthy representatives of the Gospel or of Protestantism who fail to appreciate this witness, or to live and act under its inspirations. But we should add to this the kindred instrumentality of the sacraments and ordinances of our holy religion, the agencies of the church and its membership, the power of prayer and praise and godly living, and also the providential dealings of God with men in prosperity and in their adversity,—

all which the Holy Ghost in boundlessly diversified forms utilizes in regenerating and converting men. The Symbols are indeed careful to avoid, for illustration, the dogma of baptismal regeneration, in the case either of adults or of infants. The Confession affirms (Chap. XXVIII : v–vi) that *grace and salvation are not inseparably annexed* to the sacrament of baptism,—that though in the case of infants regeneration may occur in conjunction with that ordinance, yet the two *are not tied* together,—that the child may have been regenerate as Samuel was even from birth, or that regenerative grace may be bestowed upon it long afterward, as a final reward of parental faith and consecration. It denies that the reception of the sacrament is *essential to salvation*, and forbids us to think that all baptized persons are also regenerate. In a similar manner the Confession guards, as we shall see hereafter, against false views of the relation between the sacrament of the Supper and the regeneration of those partaking of that solemn feast of commemoration, and also against all notion that the mere hearing of the word preached, or the public profession of faith, or participation in the activities of the church, or other like external acts, are any substitute for regeneration, or are decisive signs that those who thus adhere to Christianity in an outward and formal sense are really born again.

Yet it is a precious truth often verified in experience, that the Spirit uses all these Christian institutions and ordinances, and also in many cases the providences of God both favorable and afflictive, as his instruments and helps in bringing sinners to conversion and the renewed life in Christ. The manner in which he uses and applies them may vary widely, as the instrumentalities are widely varied. Nor are we to suppose that the process of salvation is always the same in its incidents and conditions, though the result be always one and the same. There is as large a variety of aspect in converted souls as we see in the natural countenances of men. The specific products of grace are as various as the instruments and agencies employed;—these instruments and agencies being in each case so adjusted and conjoined as to bring about most effectually the end sought in the gracious call. But over and above all we are to discern always the transcendent truth of truths that, amid this immeasurable diversity of gifts and operations and result, there is but the one gracious Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

The chapter in the Confession (XI), following that which has just been considered, treats of the great truth which was the

watchword on the banners of the Reformation, and which must ever be esteemed as central in any creed or system that merits the name of Christian—the truth of *Justification* before God and his law through faith in Christ only. This was the keynote in Protestant symbolism from the beginning; it has been the supreme doctrine in all Protestant theology from the *Loci Communes* of Melancthon down to our own time. The years of labor spent by the Roman ecclesiastics at Trent in the fabrication of their astute exposition of the doctrine, show how fully they were agreed with Luther as to the vital significance of the question, How can man be just or justified before God? The answer of Luther to that question was the point of final rupture between him and the corrupted church whose false and delusive answers were alike destructive to faith and ruinous to the souls of men. Here the Reformers, notwithstanding all their differences as to the sacraments and ecclesiastical organization and the like, stood together as one man, as Luther had stood even alone at the famous Diet at Worms. Justification, not in the estimation of the priesthood or before the church, but before God and in the presence of his holy law—justification by faith, not through works or sacrifices ecclesiastically imposed,—justification by faith in Christ directly, not through the church or the hierarchy as media,—justification by faith in Christ as the divinely appointed Mediator, the only prophet and priest and king of his believing people, and in what he had done and suffered from Bethlehem to Calvary and the Mount of Olives;—this was the truth which all alike held to be fundamental in the Christian scheme, and to which they committed themselves for time and for eternity. And it was the happy privilege of the divines of Westminster to gather up reverently all that Luther and Calvin and others had formulated and affirmed touching this vital doctrine, and both to give to that doctrine the completest practicable expression, and to set it as they did when thus expressed in the very center of their noble system.

10. Justification defined: its ground in Christ only.

It seems at first glance like an unmethodical return from the subject of effectual calling through the Holy Spirit, with its consequent regeneration and conversion, to the objective work of Christ the Son, as already described in the comprehensive chapter (VIII) on his mediation. But it should be remembered that we are contemplating still, on the divine side of it, what has been described as the one and single process of salvation, and that in that one process both Spirit and Son are ever conjoined; the Son furnishing the broad and solid foundation on which alone salvation

and reconciliation with God become possible; the Spirit moving upon the heart of the world, and effectually calling sinners to accept and enjoy the salvation thus divinely provided. While in our analysis, and for the purpose of logical exposition, we may contemplate regeneration by the Spirit and justification through the Son as separate, yet a deeper unity is apparent which makes both of these aspects of salvation correlated parts of the one grand process. For in reality none but regenerate persons are justified before God and none but justified persons are regenerated. Nor can we say that in fact the one perceptibly precedes the other in time, though in the order of thought we naturally follow the method of the Westminster divines in placing the inward experience of grace before the outward reception of the blessings which grace bestows. An illustration may be found in Calvin, (Inst. B. III:1–10) where not only regeneration but faith and repentance, and the Christian life are considered, before the doctrine of justification is introduced. In other words, it is easier to think of the soul as first regenerated and converted, and then pardoned and accepted before God as righteous in virtue of the redemption from guilt and condemnation which the atoning work of Christ has provided. But whatever the order, the process is but one: regeneration and justification are the two foci in the ellipse: salvation fills all the space with its supernal glory.

The Shorter Catechism(33)furnishes an adequate and admirable definition of justification as an act of God's free grace wherein he *pardoneth all our sins* and *accepteth us as righteous* in his sight, only for *the righteousness of Christ imputed* to us and *received by faith alone*. In the Larger Catechism (70–73) the definition is considerably expanded; chiefly for the purpose of emphasizing the freeness of the grace that justifies, and the nature and operation of the faith which is required of man as a condition. The Confession (XI:iii–iv) repeats much that had been already stated in the chapter on Mediation respecting the *proper, real and full satisfaction* provided in Christ, and the relation of the whole process to the *eternal decree and purpose to justify all the elect*, together with a statement respecting the relations between justification and forgiveness. We may profitably distribute these correlated definitions into the following particulars:

First: justification is as much a divine procedure as regeneration: it is God the Father who justifies in virtue of the mediation of God the Son, as it is God the Spirit who effectually calls the sinner to the acceptance of such justification, and thus induces conversion and the new life in Christ.

Secondly: justification is *an act*, single and immediate, while effectual calling and sanctification are described as works—works requiring time. In a word, the soul repentant and believing is justified instantly, and once for all,—remains in the justified state henceforth. The justifying act is not conditional,—postponed, as the Council of Trent affirmed, until sanctification is completed at the end of life, but as a judicial procedure transpires at the very beginning of that life, and needs no repetition.

Thirdly: justification is an act of *free grace*, not an act which man by virtue of inherent righteousness or goodness can justly claim, or one which man can deserve as a reward of conversion or of evangelical obedience, but simply an expression of free or unconstrained and unmerited love on the part of God.

Fourthly: the sole basis of this justifying act is found in what is termed *the righteousness*, or as in the Larger Catechism, *the perfect obedience and full satisfaction* of Christ; a satisfaction proper and real and complete, rendered according to the Confession to the divine justice—in other words, in the gracious mediation of the Immanuel, and in this only.

Fifthly: this satisfying act on the part of Christ, which is the sole ground of justification, is set forth in the Symbols, as in the Protestant symbolism generally, as a judicial procedure, a transaction at the bar of divine government, as the word, imputation, implies—an objective and formal act, as distinct from the subjective act or work of regeneration.

Sixthly: the satisfaction to divine justice thus provided by the mediation of Christ does not of itself justify, but must be appropriated by the human person under the persuasives of the Holy Spirit, and be received *by faith only*—through the trustful and unreserved commitment of the soul to this as the only and the perfect ground of its acceptance with God.

When we come to consider the human side of the process of salvation, it will become needful to define more exactly the nature and operation of justifying faith, as one of these elements in the general doctrine of justification. What has been said already respecting the imputation of the sin of our first parents to the whole race as being inseparably conjoined with them under a divine constitution of things; and also respecting the imputation of the sin of the race, or of the elect, to Christ as their appointed representative under divine law, sufficiently explains the use of the term here—the righteousness of Christ *imputed* to us—as descriptive simply of the fact that believers are treated at the bar of divine justice as they could not be treated in and of themselves.

in virtue of the relationship and union established through faith with Christ as their only and sufficient Redeemer. In this instance it should be noted that the conception of a forensic procedure which the term suggests, is Pauline only, and that in the Revised Version the less rigid term, reckon, evidently commercial or social rather than judicial, is used as a more exact translation of the original word. In the Confession (XI) and in the Larger Catechism (70) the cognate terms, *accounting*, *accounteth*, are used as nearly synonymous with the word, *impute*. At the same time the more positively legal term has figured so largely in the Protestant and especially in Calvinistic theologies, and is so prominently used in the Symbols, that we may properly avail ourselves of it as at least a helpful image or illustration in setting forth that divine act of grace exhibited in the formal justification of all believers with God through Christ. It should also be noted at this point, that while there is substantial unanimity of belief among all schools of Protestantism as to the six points or elements of the doctrine just named, considerable variety of opinion has been apparent, especially among the later expounders of the doctrine, as to certain specific problems involved in them;—as for example, whether the satisfaction rendered by Christ to law and justice was provided by his passive obedience, his vicarious sufferings and death only, or by his comprehensive obedience, active as well as passive, exhibited throughout his mediatorial career.

Recognizing thus the general doctrine of justification, as to its nature, its source in divine grace, its ground in the mediatorial satisfaction of Christ, and the condition of its acceptance, we may now pass to consider its two specific elements, as given in the catechetic definitions, *pardon of all our sins*, and *accepting us*, or our persons, *as righteous* in the sight of God. The Sec. Helv. Conf. says that according to the apostolic definition, justification signifies, to remit or pardon sin, to absolve from guilt and penalty, to receive into favor, and to pronounce just or righteous. All these elements are properly included in the two terms, pardon and acceptance. These may now be considered in the order given:

11. Elements of justification: pardon and acceptance.

Pardon and forgiveness are correlated, though not exactly synonymous terms: forgiveness pointing rather to the inward disposition or willingness to overlook, the temper of reconciliation, as we contrast it with the temper of alienation or the desire or purpose to inflict penalty due: pardon relating rather to the act of forgiving or overlooking an offense or transgression. With

reference to this inward disposition, the Confession, even amid its solemn recognition of the justice, the sovereignty, the holy wrath of Deity against all transgression, describes God, in language often unnoticed (II: i), as *most loving, gracious, merciful;* long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth; *forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* It is said (VII: iii) that in view of the fall of man, God *was pleased* to make a second covenant, in which he freely offers life and salvation to men—the offer springing directly from his fatherly desire that sinners should be reconciled with him on the ground that he is already reconciled toward them. It should be borne in mind here as in some other connections that the word, pleasure, and its derivatives, is not used in the Symbols in the current sense of our time, but in the regal and majestic sense, as descriptive of the purpose and mandate of a sovereign. So our Lord in many a parable, and in aphorisms and direct affirmations, continually represents God as cherishing this inward temper of forgiveness, this parental longing to draw sinful men back to his embrace, and to grant them a free and abundant salvation. Surely they greatly misapprehend alike the nature of God and the character of the Gospel, who fail to recognize this temper of forgiveness, this holy mood of reconciliation, as underlying the entire scheme of grace. It is of course a mistake of equal seriousness to fancy that this scheme is a product of love only, apart from what justice demands in such a transaction: God must be just as well as merciful in the forgiving of sin.

The act of pardon, which is the outward expression of this divine feeling and purpose, is the first step in actual justification. He *pardoneth all our sins:* in other words, he obliterates the record and memory of them, and no longer counts them as offenses committed against him. It is not the overlooking of some notable sins, or of this or that overt act, or of minor transgressions only, or wicked impulses which fail to eventuate in action, but of all sins that have been or are or ever may be committed: for we are taught (XI: v) that God *doth continue to forgive* the sins of those that are justified. In the analysis of the fifth petition in the prayer taught us by Christ (L. C. 194: S. C. 105) such complete and free forgiveness on the part of God is recognized as the fundamental gift of grace. In a word, the Gospel is throughout a scheme of pardon, instantly granted in and with regeneration, and freely bestowed in all its fullness on every one for whom Christ in his gracious mediation intercedes.

The Symbols are careful to guard against the impression that good works, even the good works of justified men, are in any

way the ground of such abundant pardon: since (XVI:iii) *their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves*, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. They tell us (XV:iii) that even repentance is not to be rested in as any satisfaction for sin, or *any cause of the pardon thereof*. The cause and ground of forgiveness are the cause and ground of justification: only for the righteousness of Christ imputed or reckoned unto us, and received by faith alone. Such propositions forever preclude the delusive notion that, since God is merciful and gracious, ever ready to forgive, men may simply cast themselves upon his grace, without the introducing mediation of Christ. Pardon, with implied permission to continue in sin, or pardon on any other ground than that which he had himself provided and offered to men in the Gospel, would be an act unworthy of God. If he could thus overlook human transgression, and consent to see sinners going on without reformation or restraint or in the rejection of his published offer, his mercifulness would be a blemish rather than a perfection; and his administration, having in it no reference to the conversion as well as pardon of sinners, would become an awful mystery, such as would leave the sinful race of man without hope.

It has been held by some Protestant theologians that the pardon here contemplated is not the initial part merely, but the whole of justification. The pardoned sinner, it is said, is a justified and therefore a saved man. But a much broader and deeper conception is conveyed to us in the added phrase of the definition—*accepteth us* (or our persons) *as righteous in his sight:* accepteth and *accounteth*, as it is in the Larger Catechism and Confession. Back of the question, what shall be done concerning the sins, lies the far greater question, what shall be done with the sinner? Back of his particular acts overt and his secret impulses toward evil, stands the man himself, with the deep roots of evil penetrating his moral nature throughout, and making him offensive in the sight even of a forgiving God. The person is behind the transgression—the sinful man behind his acts: and the certainty is that, even if he were once pardoned, his proneness to sin would only lead him on to further evil, and so continually. It is therefore incumbent upon God, in the application of the scheme of grace, to provide for the treatment of such a person,—to do what is needful to save the sinner, as well as to blot out the record of his offenses. In other words, it becomes necessary to accept the sinner personally, corrupt as he still may be, and to regard and treat him as if he were a righteous person—as if he had never transgressed. Without this further step, there could be no adequate

justification, and therefore no sufficient salvation. Pardon must draw such acceptance after it, in order to be true and effectual pardon: regeneration must include this, else regeneration would not save: the converted man must be accepted just as he is, if the reconciliation is to be complete and sufficient: his salvation must carry with it the treatment of him henceforth as righteous, all unworthy though he is; and nothing but his union with Christ through faith can render him worthy of such cordial acceptation before the throne of the Father.

This in a word is the doctrine of the Symbols; that God by his Spirit does not *infuse righteousness* into regenerate souls in such a way and measure as to make them instantly and forever holy;—that he does not treat them as holy by *imputing faith to them*, or the act of believing, or *evangelical obedience* in any form: but that he accounts and treats them as if holy, in virtue of their union with Christ established through faith. It is indeed a large and strange conception that the persons of sinful men, while still animated in a measure by the impulsions of sin, should be regarded by God as angels are, and even as Christ himself is—as though they were as holy, harmless, undefiled as their Redeemer. Yet such is the doctrine of acceptance, as elaborated by the divines of Westminster, and as held in substance by the Reformers generally. We turn to the creeds for abundant evidence of this fact. Freely received with favor, and their sins forgiven, is the terse statement of the Augsburg Confession. For the sake of the righteousness and obedience of Christ we are received by God, and accounted righteous, testifies the Formula of Concord. For his sake, God is reconciled, and imputes to us not our sins, but the righteousness of Christ as our own, affirms the Second Helvetic Confession; and the First agrees with it in substance. It behooves us, says the old Scotch Confession, to apprehend Jesus Christ with his justice and satisfaction, which is the end and accomplishment of the law, by whom we are set at this liberty that the curse and malediction of God fall not upon us. And the Thirty-Nine Articles, in language repeated in the Irish Articles, respond heartily in the declaration: We are accounted righteous before God only for the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.* Thus throughout

*In the Sum of Saving Knowledge, the doctrine is quaintly presented in its most objective type not without some doubtful features, in the statement that it is agreed betwixt God and the Mediator, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, surety for the redeemed, as parties contractors, that the sins of the

the Protestant formularies we find that, while few of them draw any broad line of distinction between the acts and the person acting, such as the Symbols show, they are agreed in emphasizing that high and cardinal doctrine of justification by faith in Christ only through both pardon and acceptance, which Luther declared to be the *articula vel stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*.

Summing up at this point all that has been said, we may discern in justification, as including both pardon and acceptance as now defined, a change of estate, of condition and relationship, corresponding to that interior change wrought in regeneration as the inducing cause of conversion and of spiritual life within the soul. The justified man passes decisively from his old estate by nature into the new estate of grace. His former sins are now as completely blotted out from the divine records as if they had never occurred, and he is assured that for every future sin into which he may fall, like forgiveness is assured. He is no longer a convicted criminal before the divine law, but goes forth from the tribunal of God, not indeed an innocent, but a forgiven and restored man. He is not now a rebel, but an accepted and loyal subject of the divine government. Justice no longer arraigns him, but freely absolves him for every offense against its holy majesty. In a word, God is reconciled with him, and he is reconciled to God: he is persona grata in the court of heaven, and is not only treated now as a righteous person, but will be so regarded and treated henceforth forever. Formally received into the divine favor, restored to the place which through sin he had forfeited, he is invested anew with all the rights and privileges appertaining to his new relationship. He is now set in an estate of grace as positive and comprehensive as was his original estate of nature, and in that blessed estate, provided for him through the mediation of the Son of God, he will abide eternally.

12. Theories of Justification: Historic sketch.

Such briefly outlined is that doctrine of justification on which Luther and Calvin and the Reformers universally laid such stress as the most central and vital tenet of grace, and to which the Westminster divines gave such marked prominence in their theological system. It might be expected that such a doctrine would for many reasons meet with intense opposition,

redeemed should be imputed to innocent Christ, and he both condemned and put to death for them, upon this very condition that whosoever heartily consents unto the covenant of reconciliation offered through Christ, should by the imputation of his obedience unto them, be justified and holden righteous before God.

not from Rome only, but from unbelief in its various forms; and that in process of time antagonistic theories would arise within the boundaries of nominal Christendom, proposing to answer in some other way the momentous question, How shall man be justified before God. A brief glance at these theories may serve to deepen our conviction that the answer of evangelical Protestantism is the only answer which either Scripture or sound ethical philosophy can approve. Such a survey is of special moment just at present, when in various forms the evangelical statement is not only called in question, but openly pronounced a theologic fiction unworthy of intelligent credence.

The most frequent type of such antagonism is that which rests on the assumption that mankind are not sinful, or that sin is only an incidental and trivial element in human experience; and which consequently affirms that no formal justification before God and his law is necessary to the removal of sinfulness or guilt. Close to this lies the hypothesis that, although mankind may be in a deeper sense sinful, this sinfulness is more than offset by the righteousness still inherent in human nature and manifested in human life; and that God may therefore equitably overlook or condone the former fact in view of the latter as compensatory. It is further alleged that, although mankind are thus positively sinful, God is too merciful to punish such sinfulness or to require any expiation for it; and that, if inherent righteousness be not sufficient, confession and repentance, and obedience in the future, will surely satisfy his claim and secure complete pardon. It is also objected that the entire conception of law and government, administered on the principles of strict justice, and enforced by retributive sovereignty, is really unwarranted; and that God deals with mankind rather on the basis of fatherhood, and as a Father is carrying forward among men a system of training and culture, in which even the agency of sin is included, and by which the race will be developed finally into such a state of intrinsic justification and of true holiness as will be acceptable with him. It is still further alleged that, if any more formal process of justification is in fact needed, the method set forth in the Scriptures and embodied in evangelical symbolism, is open at many points to irresistible objection, and must be set aside as a theologic abstraction;—the solution of the problem being either sought elsewhere or pronounced unattainable.

Another type of objection may be seen in the affirmation that atonement or expiation for sin, or the removal by any method of the penalty due to sin, is in the nature of things impracticable;—

that nature itself teaches that he who sins must by an inevitable law of existence suffer the punitive consequences of his act,—that the human conscience and sense of right forbid the waiving of such an issue, whether by laying the guilt of personal wrong-doing upon another, or by any other conceivable process,—and that God himself cannot equitably attempt to prevent the rightful application of his own penal law, or in justice to himself or to the moral universe let the sinner go unpunished. A still darker form of objection casts the full responsibility for the existence and effect of sin upon God who, it is said, has set up a system of things in which, man being such as God has made him, sin is not only natural but inevitable, and for which therefore man is not accountable, and ought neither to be punished nor required to provide or acquiesce in any method of expiation:—God being in fact the author and in some sense the approver of sin, and therefore being obligated to justify himself to himself, rather than to require any justification for or from man as his creature. Kindred to this is the thoroughly agnostic position, which not only sets aside both the plan of justification proposed in the Scriptures, and all other schemes whether incorporated in the natural faiths of the world, or proposed as deductions of the natural reason, but also pronounces the great question, How shall man be just with God, wholly unanswerable in the present life, and therefore an unfit matter for human speculation or research.

The story of the answer of Christianity to these and all kindred varieties of doubt or unbelief is one of the most interesting chapters in the history of Christian doctrine. It begins with the witness of the Old Testament to the truth that God, even from the event of the Fall, was gradually unfolding to the patriarchal world his method of expiating human sin, and of restoring the fallen race to a state of pardon and acceptance with him. Provision for the justification of sinners through faith in a promised Savior—as another (Buchanan) has said—runs through the whole course of the Jewish dispensation; and the songs of faith fall on our ears like a chorus of sweet music, as the Jewish Church was ready to vanish away. The precious truth retained its place even among the superstitions and ceremonialisms of Hebraism at the time of the Advent: neither the fancied effect of personal rectitude, nor the supposed efficacy of repentance, nor the belief in the divine mercy as sufficient, was able wholly to obliterate it. How carefully both our Lord and his apostles labored to correct these tendencies, and to bring out by contrast the conception of a justification secured vicariously through the expiation of the Cross and appropriated by faith alone, is familiar to all students,

especially of the Pauline writings. The epistle to the Roman church, clear as it is profound, positive in its dogmatic utterance and irresistible in its logic, is the key to the entire New Testament position. The natural tendency to ceremonialism within the developing church, the emphasizing of circumcision and other Mosaic rites, the exaltation of moral law in contrast with grace as the foundation of hope, the proneness to regard evangelical obedience as the acceptable condition of divine favor,—all these were carefully corrected in the apostolic writings; and by contrast the revealed conception of justification through faith in Christ as an atoning Savior, was everywhere set forth as the corner-stone of saving belief. So true and so obvious is this, that one is constrained either to accept the doctrine on the authority of the inspired Word, or to cast aside that Word, or at least those sections of it which contain this doctrine, as of human origin and unworthy of rational credence.

The formulation of the doctrine in opposition to unbelief began, though in crude and imperfect ways, in the earliest periods of the Christian Church. The patristic writings down to the age of Augustine, not indeed in all cases, nor with adequate fullness and proper freedom from speculative opinion in any, still indicate the growing faith and acceptation of the great truth, as one of the vital elements in the Gospel. The ancient Church believed, not only in the forgiveness of sin—as the earliest creed affirms—but in the forgiveness of sin through the mediation of that Son of God whom the Nicene creed described as not only born and living among men, but also crucified and buried, for us men and for our salvation. In the writings of Augustine himself, as Ritschl justly says, the elements of diverse notions of justification adhere, too much entangled, too little marked off from each other, to furnish a complete conception. It is rather the deliverance of man from the miseries of sin, and his restoration to a condition of blessedness (Civ. Dei. B. IX:15), than a forensic change of status before God, on which Augustine chiefly dwells. It is painful to trace the slow subsequent development of the great truth in the presence of diversified errors,—including even the grotesque notion that the expiation of the Cross was made not to God but to Satan, —down to the Scholastic era. There are times when it seems as if the doctrine would be altogether stripped of its biblical quality, and either dried into an unmeaning formula, or wholly lost out from the belief and heart of the church. In the writings of Anselm and Abelard and other scholastics, down to the period of Aquinas and the positive formulation of the papal theory, we note another

important stage in the theologic evolution,—a stage far from complete in itself, but marking an important advance on all that had preceded it. In that theory at least three radical defects appear, —the confusion of justification and sanctification, by which the former becomes dependent on the later; the infusion of the mischievous notion of human merit as a ground of justification; and the introduction of the priesthood and the church as instrumental agents in the justifying procedure.

That the Reformers were, as papal writers allege, introducing a novelty into the category of Christian beliefs when, in contrast with the error of Rome, they proclaimed the full and true doctrine of justification through Christ, obtained by faith in his gracious mediation, is not to be credited. They in fact simply gathered up and stated in completer form all that had been cherished by devout minds in forms less complete, from the beginning of Christianity, and even from the better ages of Hebraism. They saw the imperfection and the inadequacy of the papal definition, largely founded as it was on patristic and scholastic tradition, and in its stead framed a broader, loftier, clearer definition, based on the biblical teachings only. They saw the fatal error in the Roman notion of pardon as indicated in the sale of indulgences, and declared by contrast that Christ alone can forgive sin. They saw the error equally fatal lying in the Roman notion of merit gained through conformity with churchly prescripts and observances, and declared that the only merit which could secure acceptance with God—the only righteousness available at the tribunal of his justice, is the merit, the righteousness, found in Christ. As to both the nature and the ground of justification, and to spiritual faith as the means whereby the soul may avail itself of the divine offer, and secure pardon and acceptance with all consequent gifts and graces, they planted themselves firmly on the teaching of the Bible, and on that teaching alone. And they crowned their doctrine and glorified it, as had never been done before in Christian history, by insisting that justification is a single act,—an act transpiring at the very beginning of the renewed life, and needing no repetition either on earth or in heaven,—the soul once justified by Christ through faith, being justified instantly, completely and forever.

All this becomes manifest abundantly in the Confessions of Protestantism, and in the writings of its leading divines, both Lutheran and Reformed. Differing and even antagonistic views on specific points made their appearance in Protestant circles as the doctrine came to be more thoroughly analyzed, and one feature

or another in it received peculiar emphasis through the advocacy of individual minds. What have been called declensions and revivals, relapses from the essential truth in some particular, followed by fresh and more strenuous advocacy, reveal themselves, sometimes painfully, in the history of Protestant thought in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. Illustrations of such lateral divergency, such minor variation, are quite apparent: it is needless to refer to them in detail. Still the general fact remains in all its impressiveness,—that, as in contrast with both Romanism and all Socinian, Pelagian, Antinomian heresy wearing the Protestant name, the evangelical communions, both Continental and British, were essentially one in holding the grand truth expressed by Luther in the phrase, Justification by faith in Christ and Christ only. Subsequent Protestantism of all evangelical types has held to that central truth in its fullness and preciousness, and is likely to remain steadfast therein, so long as the Scriptures retain their place in the confidence of men. And here, in a word, is the enduring answer of Christianity to all the varieties of unbelief just described: Justification before God is both indispensable and possible, and such justification is secured, not through the righteousness or the sacrifices of men, but through the mediation of Christ as an atoning Savior, accepted and appropriated through personal faith, and through such faith only: See Owen, Buchanan, Ritschl.

13. Adoption: its nature and value; its relations to justification.

The addition of the short chapter (XII) on *Adoption*, following immediately the statement of Effectual Calling and Justification and preceding that on Sanctification, is an interesting illustration of the desire of the Westminster divines to incorporate in every possible way spiritual as well as theological truth in their Symbols. No chapter or even formal article or affirmation on this subject appears in any of the earlier creeds. The doctrine of the fatherhood of God, and especially of such fatherhood as manifested toward believers in the field of providence and grace, indeed appears incidentally in several of them—especially in those which, like the Heidelberg Catechism, were designed for spiritual culture and profit primarily. Corresponding expressions, describing believers as the children of God, his elect children, his good and beloved children, may also be found here and there. The Heidelberg Catechism declares (33) that while Christ alone is the eternal natural Son of God, we also are children of God by adoption through grace for his sake. In the Thirty-Nine

Articles (XVII) it said that the elect in addition to their being called and freely justified, are also made the sons of God by adoption, and are thus enabled under the nurture of the Spirit to attain to everlasting felicity. But in the Confession we have what is termed *the grace of adoption* formally set forth as a gift of God superadded upon the grace of justification, and the particular privileges flowing from this gracious bestowment are elaborately described, chiefly in the very words of Scripture. In the two Catechisms the doctrine is also introduced as following justification and preceding sanctification in the series of benefits which believers partake of in this life; and in the Shorter it is condensed (34) into the simple statement that the elect being justified are *received into the number and have the right to all the privileges of the sons of God.*

This formal arrangement would lead the student to suppose that while in all cases those who are justified, and they only, are thus adopted into the divine family, this privilege of sonship is an added and a special bestowment—a gracious benefit in which the divine purpose of salvation, complete and enduring, further expresses itself. Calvinistic theologians generally have thus taught that adoption is a new and particular grace in advance of justification. It has also been held by many that man by nature is not a child of God but only a creature and subject, and that the exaltation of the regenerate man into the relation of sonship is one of the most distinguishing and illustrious exhibitions of saving grace. Some Calvinists, however, have maintained that the legal transaction which the term suggests—the selection of one who by birth is an alien, his introduction into a family, and his investiture with the rights and privileges belonging naturally to one born into the home—is only a special and graphic illustration, drawn from Roman law, to set forth what is presented in more general form in justification itself. Ussher (Method) uses the generic term, reconciliation, and treats justification and adoption as its two branches or parts. Certainly the pardon and acceptance of a regenerate person as righteous, involving full reconciliation and restoration to the divine favor in the permanent estate of grace, imply if they do not directly express all that is contained in the more specific term, adoption.

Recognizing adoption therefore as being not so much a separate or added benefit as an integral part or feature of justification itself—a presentation, in the language of Owen, of the blessings of justification in new phases and relations; or in the phrase of Watson, a concomitant of justification—we may still note two

points of particular interest, in the confessional exposition of the doctrine:

First; the thoroughly scriptural quality of the statements made, and the fullness and beauty of their presentation. The conception belongs to the New Testament rather than the Old: in the Old the believer is more commonly described as a servant—in the New he becomes distinctively a son. The adopted soul according to the Symbols enjoys at once all the liberties and privileges of the spiritual children of God under the Gospel: it bears the name of God, as the adopted child under human law bears the name of those who have assumed toward it the relation of parent; it may call God its Father, and may have freest access to his presence as in prayer; it is tenderly protected and provided for in his infinite love and pity; it may be chastened by him when needful, but will never be cast off, and is the rather sealed and guaranteed in its established relationship; it is made heir of all the promises of the Gospel, and a fellow-heir with Christ in glory everlasting. With such inspired language and illustration is the theologic conception enriched and beautified; and surely it is not strange that the devout minds of Westminster should have desired to incorporate such a concept in the formularies which they were framing, not merely as a system of doctrine, but also a body of practical truth brought together for the supreme purpose of instructing, animating, saving men.

Secondly: we may note the peculiar blending of what is subjective with what is objective in this conception;—the Spirit of God working within the soul, stirring up its responsive feeling, and teaching it to cry, Abba Father, while the external and legal process is going on, and the outward relationship is being formally instituted. In justification proper we simply see what is outward, the pardon bestowed, the person accepted, the righteousness of Christ investing the soul as a garment—a forensic procedure throughout, though resting on a regenerative work wrought within. But in adoption the inward experience—the parental love with all its gracious yearnings on the divine side, and the filial sensibility flowing forth in responsive devotion on the side of man—seems to stand behind the formal act, and give it what we recognize as a supernatural attractiveness and power. It is the holy sentiment of fatherhood dwelling and throbbing in the breast of Deity, and the glad uplifting of the regenerate soul to God in a love which the Holy Ghost induces,—it is these subjective features which give to the formal act its most precious significance. In a word, it is the spirit of adoption in us as believers, and the paternal

spirit in him whom by faith we call our Father, which makes the legal ceremony all that Paul in his enthusiasm declared it to be.

It has been objected to the chapter on Adoption, on one hand that its exposition of the doctrine is too meager and inexact theologically, and on the other hand that its description of the privileges and benefits of adoption is too general and diffuse. The matter seems to have excited no debate in the Assembly, and may have been passed over without critical examination. Yet in that description we may find all, or nearly all, that is taught on the subject in the Bible. And whatever of inexactness or theological incompleteness appears in the exposition, may be easily explained by reference to the special prominence given by the earlier Protestantism to justification distinctively, and by the further fact that an adequate definition of justification seems to include substantially most that is implied in the term, adoption. As it stands, the chapter has at least the merit of drawing our thoughts away from the technical and formal aspects of justification as a forensic act, and fixing them more fully on that blessed relationship which in and through justification is forever established between the justified soul and God in Christ. The English Presbyterian Articles define the doctrine tersely in the declaration: We believe that those who receive Christ by faith are united to him, so that they are partakers in his life, and receive of his fullness; and they are adopted into the family of God, are made heirs of Christ, and have his Spirit abiding in them, the witness to their sonship, and the earnest of their inheritance.

With these suggestions respecting the grace of adoption we may now proceed to consider what has been recognized as the final and consummating stage, on the divine side, of the process of salvation —the work of *Sanctification*: Conf. Ch. XIII. The term is employed here, not in the outward sense of consecrating or setting apart to some religious use, as in the consecration to the priestly office, but in the interior sense of cleansing, purifying, making holy. In the two Catechisms, sanctification and effectual calling are described as *works*, while justification and adoption are said to be divine *acts*. The distinction in terms is designed—as has been already noted—to suggest that while the two latter are immediate and instantaneous, occurring once for all and never repeated except in a secondary sense, the two former are processes which more strictly speaking require time, and in the case of sanctification are ended

14. Sanctification defined, its nature: human agency in sanctification.

only when the saved soul has passed beyond time into glory. Regeneration is indeed an instant act in such a sense that we cannot properly regard any person as neither regenerate nor unregenerate, or as gradually emerging from one condition into the other, though the enlightening, convincing, persuading and enabling ministries of the Spirit may be carried on for considerable periods before the process is ended in actual and conscious conversion. But in sanctification the term, work, has still larger significance, since the Spirit having begun the renewal of the soul never pauses or rests in his holy activities until his gracious task is consummated in the entire eradication of sin and the complete establishment of holiness as the law and habit of the renewed nature.

The Shorter Catechism (35) describes this work in general, First, as *a renewal* not of the will or the intellect or moral sensibilities merely, but of *the whole man*. We have here the proper correlative to the pravitas totalis, the pervasive corruption of the entire man through sin, emphasized elsewhere in the Symbols. We are thus guarded at the outset against all narrow or partial conceptions of this spiritual process: the mind, the conscience, the will, the entire moral man, are wrought upon by the Holy Ghost. How far such a conception rises above all notions of reformation produced in opinion or in particular varieties of action by the agency of human judgment or human choice or influence merely, it is easy to discern. This work of grace is as comprehensive as the whole moral life; it reaches the character at every point; the entire nature is penetrated, suffused, transmuted by it.

Secondly: the instrumentalities used are as special as the work. *By the Word and the Spirit dwelling in them*, is the language of the Confession: *Through the powerful operation of the Spirit, applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them*, is the somewhat mystical declaration (75) of the Larger Catechism. This powerful operation of the Spirit is graphically set forth in the Confession. It is said that through him the dominion of the body of sin is destroyed: it is he who warreth effectually against the flesh and its lusts; it is he who supplies the strength through which the saints are enabled to continue the combat with evil, and it is he who trains and quickens them in the practice of holiness. This strong language is not intended to suggest that the regenerate soul has no concurrent power or responsibility in the matter of its spiritual perfection; but simply to teach that the supreme forces in the case are the same that reveal themselves in the initial experience of regeneration. Thirdly: we may note the ideal toward which this process is ever steadily tending—*the image of*

God within the soul, the image of God revealed in the life of the believer. We have already had occasion to note this remarkable phrase as descriptive of the first creation of man: *After his own image.* Here it is applied to the new creation—the creation not into natural life, but unto spiritual life. Nothing less than the reproduction of God, and especially of God in Christ, within the breast and in and through the entire man, is implied in the expression. How immeasurably this also rises above all notions of improvement in the material environment, or in the social relations, or in the general demeanor or culture of man, or in his outward character, may be easily discerned.

Entering more specifically into the analysis of this gracious work, we find it described (35) in the Shorter Catechism in the pregnant phrase: *more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.* Two coördinate processes are thus brought into view, which should be carefully distinguished and described. First: to die more and more unto sin is paralleled in the Confession by the expanded phrase, *the dominion of the whole body of sin destroyed,* and the several lusts thereof more and more *weakened and mortified.* The Larger Catechism (75) adds the explanatory phrase, *having the seeds of repentance unto life* put into their hearts. To die unto anything in the biblical sense, is to lose interest in it, to cease to feel its attractions, to rise above it into a sphere where it no longer holds or affects either the sensibilities or the will,—in a word, to give it up and abandon it as no longer an end to which the life and powers are to be devoted. A sanctified life is thus a life in which the sway and dominion of sin are forever broken. The specific lusts, appetites, passions, desires, which the native sinfulness induced, are no longer dominant in the breast. They may in some measure remain, and in their baleful influence may be felt in impulse and in action, but the soul no longer lives in them or lives for them. As forces affecting character they are more and more weakened and mortified. Such expulsion of sin as a dominating principle has become the supreme purpose of the regenerate man: he can no longer consent to evil, even if he is constrained to feel himself affected by its bad domination: it is his desire and prayer, under the influence of the Spirit, to be as free from it as He was who did no sin, and in whose mouth or life no guile, no corrupting taint, was ever found.

Secondly: sanctification implies also living more and more unto righteousness. The righteousness here contemplated is not the morality of man, the justitia externa of the older creeds, but what has just been suggested, the image of God, the image of

Christ, produced in the soul and exhibited in the character. It is realized in the possession of all saving graces, and in having these graces stirred up, increased and strengthened more and more. It is the attainment of genuine Christian experience through the daily nurture of the Spirit and through what is described (XIII:i) as *the practice of true holiness*. The regenerate and justified man grows inwardly not toward evil, but toward all moral good: he is not affiliated with worldly things or worldly minds, but with the saints on earth, with the sanctified and with angels in glory. The life of Christ is in him as a gracious and dominating power, and all his being consents to its purifying sway.

Thirdly: it should be noted that these two processes, dying unto sin and living unto righteousness, radically unlike as in some aspects they seem, are really two parts of the one composite process, and that they are to be carried on together, and as correlative experiences. The history of monasticism, and of all religious asceticisms, reveals the immeasurable folly of attempting to expel sin from body or soul, without introducing into the nature the cleansing and invigorating forces that are included in the supreme aspiration after holiness. In like manner, the history of many a true Christian has revealed the almost equal folly of attempting the practice of holiness, of striving after the image of God in the soul, while the correlative task of strenuous, constant dying unto sin is neglected. It is only as both are conjoined, that we gain real success in either. By dying more and more unto sin, we are enabled to live unto righteousness, and by living unto righteousness more and more earnestly, we are enabled to overcome sin and destroy its dark dominion over us.

The beautiful harmony of the Protestant symbols in respect to this doctrine as thus described, deserves to be carefully noted. While speculative theologians are discussing the various abstract problems which come into view in the contemplation of this gracious work, Lutheran and Calvinist and Arminian are agreed in accepting the essential fact, that under the empowering and nurturing agency of the Spirit of God the converted soul is enabled to die more and more unto sin and to live more and more unto righteousness—in a word, to rise more and more according to the strong phrase of Paul unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. But while there is such generic agreement, certain specific questions rise into notice here, which deserve brief consideration. And first: the query whether the human person has anything to do responsively with his own

15. Specific questions respecting Sanctification.

sanctification, must be answered emphatically in the affirmative, whatever may be thought of the relation of such person to his own regeneration, Augustine recognized the truth that at this point there is a divine gratia coöperans, and a regenerated human will coöperating with that divine gratia, in the carrying forward of this spiritual transformation; and Protestantism has almost universally accepted his doctrine in essence if not in form. There is much for every saint to do here, by the study of the Word, by prayer and holy culture, by faithful struggle with all besetting sin, by steadfast aspiration after the graces and virtues that appear in Christ and are found in other saints, in order adequately to work out his own sanctification, while the Spirit works within him to the same blessed end. The Symbols lay constant and consistent stress upon this element of personal responsibility as being, not indeed of coördinate merit, but equally essential and indispensable.

Secondly: the question whether this process of sanctification, being thus in a measure under the control of the human will, can be arrested, impaired, frustrated for a time, notwithstanding the purpose and effort of the Spirit of God, must also be answered affirmatively. The life of even the holiest saint reveals at many a point the malevolent influence which his remaining sinfulness, weakness, earthliness of soul, has upon this beautiful development of grace. The query whether the true Christian notwithstanding such malevolent influence will continue to seek sanctification, or may finally fall off from the stalk of grace like a blasted flower, and so perish utterly, will be fully considered later, in connection with the chapter (XVII) on Perseverance. But here we are constrained to note how weak, how earthly, how treacherous even the best human will is, though renewed and already partly sanctified,—its possessor too often living in sin, and dying unto righteousness, in apparent defiance of the working of the Holy Ghost within him.

Thirdly: while we may not now anticipate certain inquiries which will present themselves more distinctly when the human side of this process of salvation comes specially into view, yet we may note in passing the further question whether this sanctification continues through life, and is completed before or only in the hour and article of death. Surely there is a strong presumption that the divine Agent who has effectually called the soul into holiness by his enlightening and convicting and enabling energy, and in and through whom the grace of pardon has been granted, and the person of the believer accepted once as righteous and once adopted into the divine household of grace,—there is surely

a strong presumption that such a wonderful procedure will not be suffered to come wholly to naught—the sway of righteousness arrested, sin again becoming dominant, and all the grace of God frustrated. Further presumption may be drawn from the nature of sanctification itself as a process in character, affecting all the powers of the soul, and everywhere contemplating not a transitory but an enduring result.—Turning to the other aspect of the problem, there appears a presumption almost equally strong that a work such as this will not be finished in a day or a year, or indeed at any stage in this mortal life. As it stands before us, in the experience of even the holiest saint, it has the aspect of an unfinished work—a work which cannot be entirely completed under the constraints and severe oppositions of such a world as this. The Shorter Catechism expresses (37) the general conviction of the Protestant churches, and the teaching of their formularies also, in the terse statement that the souls of believers are *at their death*—not before death—made perfect and *do immediately*, as the outcome of such perfection attained, *pass into glory*.

Such is the common doctrine of evangelical Protestantism, and specifically the doctrine of the Westminster Symbols, in regard to what has been described as the divine side of the process of salvation. We have seen that in this process, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are alike concerned and conjoined. We have especially contemplated the personality of the Spirit and his assigned work within this sphere, as it appears in the common operations of grace and the effectual call, and in all the experiences that follow upon regeneration, until the soul is completely sanctified. We have contemplated also the work of the Son, the one Mediator between God and man, as exhibited in the pardon and acceptance—the complete justification of the penitent, believing soul. And while we have had occasion to note some varieties of opinion among Protestants, growing largely out of different points of vision, or of the tendency to emphasize this or that section or aspect of the composite truth, we have with pleasure discovered how largely in respect to the really fundamental matters—to regeneration and conversion, justification and sanctification, the various Protestant communions are substantially one in belief and one in experience. And it may well be noted here that the Symbols of Westminster represent, in respect to all these vital doctrines, not the discords of Protestant Christendom so much as its essential, its grand spiritual agreements.

In closing this survey of the composite work of God in human salvation, we may profitably compare at several points the Protest-

ant doctrine as now stated—especially the doctrine of justification by faith—with the teaching of that Church of Rome against which the Reformation was throughout a positive and organized protest. The Roman doctrine of justification, as formulated by the Council of Trent, in the sixteen chapters and thirty-three canons of its famous Decree, has already been referred to as one of the most remarkable theological constructions ever produced by the thought and skill of man. As a keen, studied, strategic attempt to protect those cherished errors of Roman Catholicism against which Luther had thundered so loudly, it has no parallel in the whole field of symbolism. With much that it contains respecting Christ as the ultimate ground and faith as the immediate condition of justification, and respecting good works, keeping the commandments and perseverance in holy living as conditions, evangelical Protestantism is in substantial accord. In like manner there is much in the accompanying canons as to the errors, speculative and practical, to be avoided, and to certain defective conceptions of the truth, which Protestants must recognize as just and valuable, though they repudiate the priestly anathema with which each canon solemnly closes. But the true and the false, the verity of God and the speculation of man are so blended in this remarkable Decree—scriptural warrant, spiritual power, practical effectiveness, are so lacking in it—that while we may admire the astuteness of it, the subtle distinctions and the fine balancings of antithetic propositions and the like, we are constrained, as we apply to it the simple tests of Scripture, to set it all aside as after all a fabrication of man more than the saving truth of God.

16. Concluding Survey: Roman and Protestant doctrine compared.

It was greatly to the advantage of the primitive Protestantism that, in contrast with all this formal elaboration, it could plant itself with absolute unanimity on the simple and intelligent proposition of Luther: Justification by faith in Christ only. Subsequent thought and research amplified and improved the proposition in various particulars: and one of the most interesting studies in symbolism may be found in comparing the creed statements of the doctrine, with their varieties in language and presentation, with the tributary flowing of the earlier into the later, and the continuous expansion and elaboration of the essential truth, until at length we reach the final form which the doctrine assumed in the seventeenth century, and which it still substantially retains. The Protestant statement had the enormous advantage on one hand that it was seen to be palpably biblical rather than ecclesiastical

or scholastic, and therefore infinitely more authoritative than any dogma, even of an imperial church: and on the other, that it could be comprehended by the common mind, appealed directly to the common heart, touched with an electric throb the common conscience, and so became at once a mighty spiritual force working efficaciously in common lives. In the earliest forms of it, as in the Articles of Zwingli and the Apologia of Melancthon, it commanded at once the conviction and acceptation of awakened intelligence wherever it was made known; and the more it was expanded, as in the Helvetic and the French and Belgic Confessions, the greater became its power to convince and to conquer. Neither German Syncretism nor Dutch Arminianism, though challenging certain elements,—made possibly too prominent in some of the more elaborate formularies—ever swerved from the cardinal truth that Christ alone saves, and that faith in him and his complete mediation is the sole condition, though in no sense the meriting ground, of salvation. And what was thus substantially believed by all, the divines of Wesminster had the rare privilege of embodying in its most considerate and comprehensive form; and from the substance and essence of their formulated tenet, there is as yet substantially no variation or shadow of turning among the diversified representatives of evangelical Protestantism.

Moehler (Symbolism) sets up the claim first affirmed by Bellarmine, that the Roman statement is far superior to the Protestant because—as he says—according to the latter, Christ simply casts his shadow upon the believer and so shelters him that God does not see his sinfulness, while according to the former, Christ is embodied in the believer and becomes a part of his inward self, changing thereby his spiritual condition as well as his outward estate before God. His proposition painfully illustrates the confusion and the error into which Romanism fell by failing to draw the proper line of distinction between justification and sanctification. That learned and acute critic seems to have lost sight of the fact that the Christus in Nobis, or the righteousness of Christ implanted within us and made the germ of an inward life, is abundantly recognized in the Protestant Confessions under the head of sanctification. It may be true that some Protestant, especially Calvinistic, theologians have dwelt too exclusively on the Christus pro Nobis and his objective work, and have lost sight comparatively of that correlated work which is wrought within the regenerated soul by the Spirit and by the Word, eventuating in true and blessed newness of life. But such a charge cannot justly be made against the Protestant symbols.

While they do affirm that the believing soul is justified at once and once for all, and condemn the papal dogma that justification depends on what the believer becomes through the progressive nurture of grace, and is therefore never complete until he is completely sanctified at death, or at the end of his purgatorial state, they also affirm with a strength of conviction which the divines of Trent never exhibited, that the new life experienced through grace is in reality the only available evidence of our justification before God. It is not true that even the earliest creeds were indifferent to this truth, as the Augsburg Confession (Art. IV, VI, XII, XX) the Formula of Concord (Art. III–IV) the First and Second Helvetic Confessions, and the more primitive Catechisms, clearly show. Indeed the Belgic Confession contains an Article (24) apparently intended specially to meet the papal criticism just noticed, and similar Articles (21, 22) appear in that French or Gallic Confession which has such special interest to us at this point from the fact that it was so largely framed under the direction of Calvin. The Articles on the work of the Holy Ghost in sanctification in the British symbols are if possible still more decisive: they teach beyond all question that wherever Christ justifies by his mediation, the Spirit not only regenerates but also sanctifies, and that this subjective work is in every case coördinate and of equal moment with the objective act.

Careful comparison of the Roman view with the generally accepted belief of Protestantism as to both justification and sanctification will show the superior scripturalness, the deeper spirituality, and the greater practical effectiveness and worth of the latter. The real test is the test of Scripture and of spiritual experience: the doctrine that most fully conforms to the Word, and most enlightens, elevates, spiritualizes, renews the whole man savingly, must be the true doctrine—the doctrine of God. We are not dealing here with ecclesiastical dogma or authority, with priests and sacraments as media, with penances or indulgences imposed or granted by man. We are not resting in the ordinances of the church or relying on her mediation as the foundation of our hope, according to the Roman apothegm, Through the church to Christ. Nor are we confusing things that differ, or exalting the human factor or human agency in salvation at the expense of the divine, or making either the individual or the church the final arbiter of spiritual destinies. We are simply taking Holy Scripture as it stands, trusting the Savior who is there revealed, accepting him directly in every blessed office, and by faith in him living such a life as he requires.

LECTURE NINTH—THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CHRISTIANITY A LIFE: PRODUCT OF THE SPIRIT: SAVING FAITH: REPENTANCE: GOOD WORKS: PERSEVERANCE: PERFECTION.

C. F. CH. XIV–XVIII: L. C. 72–81: S. C. 36, 86–7.

Guizot justly characterizes the Reformation as an intellectual awakening and revolution, a great insurrection of human intelligence, a renascence of the mind of Europe after ages of relative mental slumber. That great event has also been characterized as an emancipation of Christianity from the bondage of ecclesiastical tradition and the assumptions and domination of the Papacy. But it was all this, because it was also something immeasurably grander,—the restoration of the true conception of religion, which had been almost lost to view amid the errors and corruptions of the age, and the exaltation of the real life in Christ to its proper eminence both in apprehension and in experience. Here was the true and final end of this great providential and gracious movement, and to this end its intellectual, ecclesiastical, social and political features were altogether tributary. Guizot himself says that the Reformation introduced religion, which had been the exclusive domain of the clergy, into the midst of the laity—into the world of believers. Even its emphasizing of ancient creeds, its solemn confessions, and its expositions of specific doctrines concerning God and man, Christ and the plan of salvation through him, and concerning the Holy Spirit and his regenerative efficiencies, were all subsidiary to this superior object—the restoration of the Christian Life to its proper ascendency alike in faith and in practical consciousness. While here and there other features of the historic movement seem to emerge into special prominence, and while sometimes, amid the disputations and strifes and differences of opinion and policy springing up among the Protestants themselves, this one central purpose seems to disappear from view, yet closer examination always brings us back to what was supreme and ultimate in the great movement, genuine and holy living in Christ and through his grace. The diligent student of the Protestant Confessions will find them habitually recurring from

whatever digression to this fundamental problem,—the problem of the Christian Life.

This fact finds special illustration in the Symbols of Westminster. Five chapters in the Confession, and corresponding portions in the two Catechisms—as we have already seen—are devoted to the fundamental doctrines respecting the sufficiency of Scripture, the existence and character of God, and the works of creation and providence: three others present the fall and sinfulness of man, the person and mediation of Christ, and the scheme of salvation through him: five more set forth the work of the Spirit in bringing the sinner into a state of grace, and describe the specific phases of that regenerative work in the justifying and sanctifying of the believer. Now we come upon five other chapters, exhibiting the human side in this sublime process of salvation, and enabling us to see in the mirror of the regenerated consciousness what a grand and blessed thing it is to be saved through these divine instrumentalities and in this appointed way. Nor is it too much to say that these five chapters constitute the very center and substance of the entire system of truth enunciated in the Symbols; all that precedes them being in a sense introductory and preparatory, all that follows—as there will be occasion to note—being but a further expansion and application of this central and supreme constituent. The Christian life is after all the central element in all evangelical theology; all that either precedes or follows in the exposition of divine doctrine must be centered first in Christ as the divine source, and then in the Christian life itself as the grand outcome of his redemptive scheme. To set forth this life in its proper fullness and in its essential qualities, even more than to provide an intellectual formulary on whose abstract propositions the religious mind of the British Isles could agree, was the noble purpose of the Westminster divines: and it may well be judged that it is to this peculiar feature of that Confession, even more than to its philosophic and theologic excellence, that its remarkable power to attract and hold men is due.

1. Christian Life: Papal and Protestant conceptions.

That a radical contrast existed between the Roman and the Protestant conceptions of the Christian life is apparent to every student either of the respective creeds and theologies, or of the actual living of their respective adherents. There was, indeed, in the language of the Council of Trent and in other papal deliverances, much that sounded well in this regard. The need of a decisive change in the moral nature of man, the indispensableness of a second birth in Christ in order to justification, the

state of grace as distinct from the state of nature, the necessity of divine aid in reaching such a state and continuing in it, the importance of true repentance and of cordial obedience to the divine commandments, the obligation to perform all good works imposed by the church, and the privilege of sanctification through her ministries, are all set forth in the Tridentine Decrees in terms which at first view might satisfy the Protestant mind and conscience. So in the later declarations of Rome, such as the Syllabus Errorum and the Vatican Decrees, one finds phrases and statements which may be interpreted in such a spiritual sense as would bring them into harmony with the best convictions, the highest experiences, of evangelical Protestantism.

Yet closer investigation of these papal formularies will not fail to bring into light certain radical defects which sadly vitiate the whole. On one side an excessive emphasis is laid on what is merely external in religion, on form and outward act and ceremony, to such an extent as almost to hide from sight the inward and spiritual reality in religion. On another side, the church and her priestly mediation is thrust into the foreground in such a manner as almost entirely to obscure that fundamental doctrine of saving faith, personal faith in a personal Christ, in which Christian living truly begins. And still further, the essential things in religion are so diluted and minified—repentance weakened into penance, obedience changed into conformity with ecclesiastical requisitions, devotion reduced to loyalty to the church, and charity into contributions to her support and advancement—that as we read and contemplate, we almost lose the vision of what is central and essential in practical Christianity. We wonder whether true religion can flourish or even survive under the suffocating pressure of such formal and mortiferous conceptions. It would indeed be a serious error to infer that there are no truly pious souls among the multitudes who are enrolled as communicants in the papal church, or to say—as the Confession in substance declares—that that church itself is a synagogue of Satan, and no part of the true Church of God on earth. Protestantism has often erred, still sometimes errs, in failing to see the better possibilities in the case, and to perceive how much of essential religion, both in belief and in life, actually exists, notwithstanding such defects, within the fold of Rome.

But against all these diluted and delusive conceptions of religion, Protestantism was throughout an intelligent, earnest, solemn protest. Wickliffe and Huss and Savonarola had prepared the way for such a protest; and the Ninety-five Theses of Luther and the

Sixty-seven Articles of Zwingli were only the expression of the profoundest convictions as to the weakness and unprofitableness of the papal concept of religion—convictions which had worked themselves into the very heart of Christian men in central and northern Europe. The time had come when even the continued existence and preservation of spiritual Christianity demanded that clear and broad lines should be drawn between penance and scriptural repentance, between absolution by the priesthood and forgiveness with God, between submission to the church and conformity to her requisitions on one side, and true loyalty to Christ and loving obedience to his will on the other. But if the Reformation had been such a protest merely—an exposure of the weaknesses and errors of the Roman theory of religious living, and a repudiation of the corruptions consequent upon that theory, it would hardly have survived in the great struggle with papal power. It was necessary that a larger, loftier, purer conception of Christian manhood and Christian living should be introduced as a substitute. This was more important than any formal restatement of the cardinal doctrines of grace, or any new organization of the church according to the biblical ideal. Hence there appears even from the earliest periods in the Protestant development a new theory of living—a far nobler vision of what it is to be in the scriptural sense a Christian man. Evidences of this are to be found in almost every Confession, whether Lutheran or Calvinistic, and in the writings of almost every prominent Reformer. In a word, Protestantism from the first planted itself on this spiritual concept, not merely as a theory of living to be urged upon the reason and the conscience, but also as a practical test and measure of its great doctrine of justification by faith in Christ only—a test and measure of Christianity itself.

It is an exceedingly interesting study to note how this concept grows, broadens, matures, in the bright succession of the Protestant creeds and theologies. Sometimes, in the stress of the struggle against the assumptions of Rome, it is retired comparatively from view; sometimes, in the conflict with error arising within the Protestant domain itself, it seems to become relatively subordinate. In some cases it is stated in terms too brief or too vague to be easily apprehended; and in some the true doctrine is seen to be still enveloped in the web of papal error. Yet it is one of the grandest evidences of the divine origin of the Reformation, that this fundamental conception was not only rooted deeply in the conviction of all parties, but continued to grow and unfold itself like a flower, decade by decade, until at last in the later

formularies it presents itself in the largest measure of completeness which it was possible for the sanctified mind of that era to reach. Personal union with Christ, the indwelling of the Spirit, faith and repentance, the Bible as the rule of obedience, righteousness and truthfulness and charity and unselfish consecration to the glory of God and the moral welfare of the world,—these came by degrees to be not only the very essence of belief, but also the supreme law of conduct—the vital characteristic of the true Protestant. And in the five chapters in the Confession just named, together with the chapters that immediately follow, we have the consummation of the process, in terms alike of the loftiest thought and of the purest experience. This is a fact which those who misconceive and misrepresent the Westminster Symbols, as if they were mere definitions of dogma, sadly overlook. The palpable and redeeming fact in the case is that the Confession and the Catechisms are saturated alike with this practical and spiritual quality. One of the finest illustrations of this characteristic may be found in the *Sum of Saving Knowledge . . . together with the Practical Use Thereof*, which though without full ecclesiastical warrant, well represents the general sentiment of these formularies. The chief general use of Christian Doctrine, says that treatise, is to convince a man of sin and of righteousness and of judgment; partly by the law or covenant of works, that he may be humbled and become penitent; and partly by the gospel or covenant of grace, that he may become an unfeigned believer in Jesus Christ, and be strengthened in his faith upon solid grounds and warrants, and give evidence of the truth of his faith by good works, and so be saved.

2. General Conception of the Christian Life.

In turning from this introductory survey to study the grand theme itself, it becomes necessary at once to frame some definite conception of the Christian Life, not merely as presented in the creeds, but also as developed practically within the domain of Protestantism during the centuries that have intervened since these five chapters were wrought into the Confession of Faith. What is needed at this point, in other words, is a working definition of the phrase,—one which will enable the mind to discriminate on one side between this type of living and all others, and on the other side duly to appreciate this type of life in its essential qualities and in its superhuman grandeur. Here it should be noted as a primal fact that the Christian life, contemplated as an ideal, is neither a speculation evolved by philosophic

analysis of human nature, nor a dream of poetry originating in the elevated fancy of man. That life is not to be regarded as something which has sprung into existence through human wit or wisdom, or as a product of the developing experience of the race, however elevated by culture or beautified by esthetic sentiment or ennobled by natural morality. He who so conceives of it misses altogether its real significance. In a word, it is fundamental to all right or helpful apprehensions, that the Christian life should be regarded as radically and absolutely supernatural:—as throughout a life, in Pauline phrase, hid with Christ in God. This is the primal fact which differentiates it decisively from the life of the unregenerate world.

It is obvious as another primal fact that the only accurate or adequate description of this type of life must be derived from the Scriptures. No ancient traditions, no ecclesiastical prescripts, no ordinances or decrees of the church, no counsels or injunctions of men, even though they were apostles in zeal or knowledge, can define this life properly, apart from the Holy Oracles. The same Spirit who creates the Christian man, has in his own words portrayed the Christianized manhood, pointed out its inherent graces, prescribed the virtues essential to it, laid down the laws and methods of its development, provided the sources of its culture, and indicated the spiritual end toward which it must ever aspire. The Bible, in a word, as the inspired message of God to mankind, is the only authoritative witness to the nature or characteristics of the Christian life, and from its lessons there can be no legitimate departure. The spiritualized consciousness may indeed bear helpful testimony to the reality and nature of that life, and the unfolding experience of the multitudo fidelium, the true Church of God, may abundantly confirm what the individual consciousness manifests. But the final authority and test must be found in the inspired Word alone, and in that Word as illuminated and applied by the Spirit of God.

The specific elements or characteristics of the Christian life are easily discerned. We may here briefly note four particular features of that life: its ideal, its motive, its law, and its vital manifestations. First of all, the one and sole ideal is Christ himself, in the perfection of his personal qualities and virtues, and in both his teaching and his example. In his presence, as apprehended by the true disciple, all standards of natural ethics, all precepts of earthly policy, all worldly examples however bright or eminent, fade away. The believer is not governed even by the law of God, regarded as an abstract rule of action, strict and clear and in some

sense fearful in its impersonal sway. Not even the teachings and commandments of Christ himself, considered apart from his holy personality, can be made the supreme canon of Christian living. It is in the personal Christ alone, in all that constitutes him our prophet and priest and king, ruling alike by his words and his illustrative action, and becoming himself the vivid law that regulates thought and purpose and activity,—in this personal Christ alone, as he himself abundantly declared, that the Christian finds his supreme and sufficient ideal. He is both author and finisher of faith, not merely in the sense of having both begun and completed by himself that scheme of redemption on which faith reposes, but as being in the added sense the one sole object on which the eye of faith loves to rest for guidance, and in which the heart of faith more and more rejoices, as the believer moves on and upward in the regenerate experience.

Secondly: the central motive in Christian living is love, in the biblical significance of that word. Primarily it is love toward God in his threefold personality, and specially in view of his gracious manifestation of himself in the Gospel,—that love which is substantially lacking in the unrenewed nature, but which flows into the soul whenever quickened by the Holy Spirit, and becomes a supreme and absorbing sentiment within the breast,—that love to God which Christ has enjoined upon his followers as the first and greatest commandment. Consequent upon this is that Christlike love for all men of whatever class or condition, in whatever degradation or misery involved, which the Lord himself inculcated in many a parable and precept, and of which his whole life, and specifically his mediatorial mission and his atoning passion were the bright illustration. It is an aphorism that he who does not thus love his fellow men and count them as neighbors in the New Testament sense, cannot rightly claim the name of Christian. Connected with this generic love of humanity stands that specific caritas, that special affection toward the whole household of faith and to each true disciple, by which all who heartily follow Christ as their ideal, are drawn and held together within the sacred fellowship and communion of saints. Such elevated and sanctifying love, expressing itself in these three directions, is an essential, indispensable element in the Christianized character,—a virtue rising in quality and scope far above all the prescripts of human morality,—a grace superior even, as an apostle testifies, to the faith that lays hold on Christ as a present Savior, or to the hope that aspires to everlasting companionship with him in glory.

Thirdly: the sole rule or authority in the Christian life is the

kingdom of heaven established within the soul in virtue of its vital union with Christ as its Redeemer and Lord. That spiritual kingdom is introduced in the covenant of loyalty, in the bond of holy allegiance, which is instituted at the very outset of the Christian career. Christ himself succinctly describes it in his analysis of the seven traits which characterize distinctively the renewed soul, and in his description of the seven beatitudes which those attain who make it the supreme purpose of their being to possess these traits, and to make them manifest in action, as his loyal adherents. In its final development it is a kingdom of heaven realized in heaven itself, where such allegiance binds the redeemed spirit to the throne of God in happy service and worship forever. But as it is experienced in the present life it is a kingdom of heaven also, as distinguished from all earthly authority or sway—a state of soul which lifts its possessor above mere human law or influence, enables it to discard the authorities or requisitions of the world as controlling motives, helps it to know and acknowledge but one rule only, and leads it on to an obedience which is ever prompt and faithful because it springs from love, and which holds the Christianized man in unswerving loyalty through all time, through all eternity.

Fourthly: we have in the list of the fruits of the Spirit as furnished by Paul in his letters to the Galatian and the Ephesian saints, and in the noble list of virtues commended by Peter to the believers scattered throughout Asia, an exhibition of the specific qualities which differentiate the Christian life from all other living. These are unselfish qualities, having their origin not in the selfhood of the natural man, but in the corrective movement and impress of the Spirit on the soul;—they are unworldly traits, having no close affinity with those elements of character which attract the natural eye, or make their possessor conspicuous in the world;—they are distinctively religious traits, never springing up in minds unaffected by divine truth, but belonging by nature exclusively within the sphere of true piety;—they are celestial qualities, affiliating their possessor not with ordinary humanity, but with angels and the sanctified. They are, in a word, Christ-like gifts and endowments, graces that spring from union with him, virtues which he both illustrates and commends to his disciples as the indispensable and the beautiful marks of their discipleship. And surely it is a most suggestive fact that the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures does not content himself with general statements merely as to the Christianized life, but again and again—as in the passages referred to—presents these

details of it with such minuteness of language and such glow of coloring as make it impossible for the student of Holy Writ to mistake as to his practical teaching. If we do not know, know thoroughly and scientifically, what the Christian life is in essence and manifestation, it is because we have not adequately studied these inspired descriptions.

3. Christian Life and the Holy Spirit: their relations.

The Christian Life may therefore be defined as a supernatural mode of living, induced through the agency of the Holy Spirit and described in the Scriptures, having the personal Christ as its ideal and love as its inspiring motive, controlled by the authority of Christ as its supreme law, and characterized by specific graces and virtues such as differentiate it essentially from the natural life of man. Accepting this as a working definition of the phrase, we shall now find it important, before proceeding to consider the specific topics involved in the doctrine, to emphasize afresh the vital relations of the Holy Spirit to such a type of life. It has already been said that such a development in character is to be regarded as thoroughly supernatural: it belongs, in other words, to a sphere in which God is specifically working to produce moral results which would be wholly unattainable without his ministrations. As in conversion and regeneration we found two persons concerned, the divine and the human; and as in the process of sanctification we discovered a gracious cōoperation between the divine and the human agent, so here the Christian life is the product, not of the divine energy acting upon man as a passive recipient merely, but of that energy working in and through the human person as a conscious and willing actor in the development of this unique spiritual product. That the position of the Christian in the sweet unfolding of such a life is one of dependence, is true beyond question: without divine help and nurture not one in the list of holy graces enumerated by Christ and by Paul and Peter would ever spring into existence. Yet in and throughout the transcendent process the human person is himself a living agent, ever working with the Spirit, and ever accountable on his side for those contributing endeavors which are as truly indispensable as the Holy Ghost is to the beautiful result. Believers in a word are, in the terms of the Confession, (XVI: ii), to obey the divine commandments, because such obedience and the good works involved in it are *the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith:* and in this way, by *godly living after this sort*, they are—it is said—to manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the

profession of the Gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, *having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.*

Considering more specifically the relations of the Holy Spirit to the development of such a type of living, we may note among the essential conditions on the part of the believer, first, absolute Trust in the Spirit. There is a threefold presentation in Scripture of acceptable religious trust: trust in God the Father in the broad field of providence and moral administration, as supremely wise and right and tender in his dealings with men, and specifically with the believer; trust in God the Son as Mediator, the prophet and priest and king, effective in every gracious office, and able and willing to save unto the uttermost; and trust in God the Spirit, within the sphere wherein he specially works, for the illumination, effectual call, regeneration and sanctifying of all those who accept the salvation offered in the Gospel. What is here to be emphasized is that this third form of religious trust is just as real, just as essential, just as efficacious in the matter of Christian living, as either of the preceding. It is a grave mistake to indulge low or vague conceptions of the relationship thus existing between the Spirit and the believer: without the same kind and the same measure of trust which is requisite to acceptance with Christ, spiritual life could not begin, nor could it, if begun, reach any worthy consummation. And such trust must include not merely belief in his personality, and confidence in his character and word, but also the willingness to commit the soul to him entirely, as the diseased patient commits his case to a wise physician, and an unswerving assurance that he can and will do for the culture of the Christly life all that is promised in the Bible. He who falls short at this point can no more expect to attain such a life, than he who hesitates to trust the mediating and atoning Savior. As we confide in the Spirit for the Scriptures and all that they contain, and as we confide in all the things of Christ which he shows unto us, so and in equal measure is he himself to be trusted at every stage and in every experience that goes to make up the renewed life in Christ.

Such confidence in the Holy Ghost as a divine Person working supernaturally both upon the soul and within it in order to induce holy living, is on the broadest philosophic grounds entirely reasonable. His character, his infinite capacities and resources, his actual operation in thus transforming myriads of human lives, his renewing and sanctifying and perfecting energy as tested by wide

experiment, warrant the demand that he shall be trusted implicitly and by all and everywhere. It is said by way of objection that we do not see him at this interior work as we see the Father in his unfolding providence; but surely there is hardly less in providence which entirely transcends our apprehension and is just as full of sacred mystery. It is said that we cannot discern the Spirit in his work as we can behold the incarnate Son, born visibly into human life, acting historically before the eyes of men, and by his acts and miracles compelling us to believe in him. But closer view reveals the fact that there is a mystery in redemption as wrought by Christ, no less profound or impressive than that which is exhibited in providence—a mystery as deep as that which appears in the production of a godly life by the Holy Spirit. It is said that the processes of grace are all incomprehensible,—that we cannot discover the connection between the instruments employed and the result produced; and above all that we can neither detect in our consciousness the presence of the Spirit nor measure the electric force he employs in transmuting our dead souls into newness of life. But certainly the presence of such mystery can never justify the conclusion that there is no Holy Ghost, or that the doctrine of a supernatural work wrought by him in human character is all an illusion. So long as in conjunction with the mystery there is made manifest in consciousness and in the developments of personal experience, a result which cannot be explained except on the hypothesis of such a divine person present and working within the soul, so long may we cherish the most implicit faith in that person, and unreservedly intrust our entire spiritual being to his gracious mediation and culture. Contemplated in the purest light available, such commitment may be not only justified but regarded as the culminating act of the human spirit—the last and supreme form of that trust in God which is at once the greatest necessity, the profoundest impulse, and the highest glory of man.

Second: Obedience to the Spirit. The Symbols contain many affirmations of the fundamental doctrine, (L. C. 91. S. C. 39) that the *duty which God requireth of man* is all summed up in *obedience to his revealed will.* It is said (XIX) that Adam and all his posterity are bound, even under the covenant of works, to personal, entire, exact and perpetual obedience; that the moral law stamped upon the heart of the race, *doth ever bind all, as well justified persons as others*, to the obedience thereof; and that this obligation springs not merely from the nature of the law itself, but *in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it.* It is said

(VIII : iv) that Christ himself as our Mediator was made under the law and did perfectly fulfill it; and that this perfect obedience, active as well as passive, was an essential part of his mediation and sacrifice. And on this ground, all Christians are called to the duty of obedience, *personal and entire, exact and perpetual*, and such obedience, exhibited in the good works required in the Gospel, is declared to be the only adequate fruit and evidence of a justifying faith. In a word, Christianity is a type of religion which begins and ends in obedience to the revealed will of God.

What should here be noted is that obedience to the Spirit is one form, and in certain aspects even the supreme form, of such generic obedience. The same loyal regard to the divine will which should be cherished toward God the Father or God the Son, is also to be manifested in equal measure and with equal fidelity toward God the Holy Ghost. There is even something special to be recognized in this third form of obedience, since it is the Spirit who makes the divine will known to the regenerated soul, who guides the soul into all duty as really as into all truth, and who empowers the soul to do whatsoever is laid upon it as a sacred obligation. As in the mystery of prayer he maketh intercession in and for the saint, himself in a true sense inditing each petition so that it conforms as an inward desire to the will of God in his comprehensive ordering of the universe, so the Spirit animates the saint in every field of service, guides him to the right solution of all problems of duty, directs him specifically what to do for God, and strengthens him to meet and discharge each divine requirement. Hence obedience to the Spirit is an indispensable element and condition in Christian living. He who does not trust the Spirit sufficiently to obey him, and to obey him in the full sense and degree just described, cannot be said to have the Spirit abiding in him, to be filled with the Spirit, to walk in and with the Spirit, according to the apostolic delineations. For the Spirit is a law as well as an inspiration, a daily guide and teacher as truly as a regenerating power; and he who does not accept the Spirit as one would accept an unerring teacher and guide, has hardly entered upon the beginnings of a fruitful Christian life.

It is true that this conception has often been perverted into error, and has become at times a fountain of corrupting superstition. The records of Christianity furnish abundant illustrations of false teaching and false living that have sprung from inadequate apprehension of this sublime truth. Men have fancied that their own imaginings or their own dogmas or heresies were the products of the Holy Ghost working mystically in heart and brain. The

inner light, as it has been termed, has been set up as a guide to truth or to duty, even where the alleged truth is not revealed in Scripture, and in some instances where the supposed duty is at variance with the requisitions of the inspired Word. Gross superstitions, corrupt practices, even deadly sins, have sometimes been justified on the ground that they were suggested or imposed by the Spirit of God. The corrective to all such aberrations and mischiefs is to be found in one simple test—the conformity of all these, or their lack of conformity, to the written Scriptures. If we believe that these Scriptures were truly inspired by the Spirit, so that what we hear in them is, in the strong phrase of the Confession, *the Spirit speaking in the Word*, then his subsequent speaking immediately to the soul, if indeed he ever speaks except in conjunction with some biblical truth or precept, must be in harmony with what he has already made known in the Bible. Our Confession has anticipated much of modern error and peril at this point, in its declaration (I : vi) that, while the inward illumination of the Spirit is necessary for the saving understanding of the Word revealed, nothing is ever at any time to be added authoritatively to that Word either by the traditions of men, or *by new revelations of the Spirit:* Minutes, 111–113. In a word, the Spirit speaking in the Scriptures and the Spirit speaking in the believing soul is ever one and the same blessed person, and is ever consistent with himself.

Third: Communion with the Spirit. The student of the teachings of our Lord and those of his apostles on this point must be impressed with the variety, the freshness and the strength of the imagery employed to describe the peculiar relationship established through grace between the Holy Ghost and the regenerate soul. He dwells in the believer and the believer dwells in him: he abides with and in a sense inhabits the disciple, as God dwells in a temple dedicated to his praise. He is a daily teacher, and every saint is a pupil in his school; a paraclete, ever ready to hasten to the Christian at whatever hour of need; a comforter ever present with his tender sympathy and care; a companion and friend walking ever by the side of those whom Christ loves, and holding intercourse habitually with them, as Christ communed with the disciples on the way to Emmaus. All true prayer is prayer in the Spirit in the sense that it is offered in harmony with his will, and under his guidance: and the believer is even said to pray by the Spirit, he himself praying in the saint and for him, with such groaning and intercession as we can never fully comprehend. Image is thus added to image, illustration is piled upon illustration,

in order to give increased emphasis to that communion of the Holy Ghost which Paul associates with the love of God and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the loftiest benediction that can be pronounced upon the assemblies of the saints.

How much is implied in such communion we may never be able in this life to comprehend. It is certain that we are in little danger of entertaining exaggerated conceptions of this wonderful fellowship, which stands out so singularly in the Word of God as in some sense the final and supreme bestowment of divine grace. It is true that serious errors have arisen at this point also,—that false doctrines as to such communion have at times corrupted the church and impaired the life of individual believers, and that false practices and even gross vices have had currency in Christendom, which have justified themselves by appeal to this transcendent truth—the keystone in some sense in the arch of Christian belief. In the Larger Catechism (105 : 113) some of these dangerous issues are detailed, and their variance with the divine Word declared. Other Protestant creeds contain similar warnings against the perversion of this blessed verity. But the truth remains notwithstanding all such error: trust in the Spirit ever leads on to obedience, and obedience opens the way to communion, and such communion becomes, as it must, the daily inspiration and the regulative principle and law of the Christian life. And well may all believers in all lands and times recite together the ardent declaration of Luther in his Catechism: The Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me by his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

4. Faith defined: creed statements: the Protestant doctrine.

Passing from these more generic aspects of the Christian Life, and contemplating that Life in its beautiful details as set forth in the Symbols, we are brought at once to the memorable chapter (XIV) on *Saving Faith*, with the equally remarkable definitions and illustrations found in the Catechisms: L. C. 72; S. C. 86. It is a significant fact that the subject of religious faith received such marked prominence in Protestant symbolism generally. The Augsburg Confession, in its strong protest against the papal error of justification through such works as the church imposed, declares (Art. IV) that men cannot be justified before God by their own powers, merits or

works, but are justified freely as a matter of grace for the sake of Christ through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor, and their sins forgiven for his sake only. And in the Article (XX) on Good Works the faith that saves is more fully defined: The name of faith doth not only signify a knowledge of the history, which may be in the wicked and in the devil, but it also signifieth a faith which believeth not only the history, but also the effect of the history; to wit, the article of remission of sins,—that through Christ we receive grace and righteousness and such remission of all transgressions. In the Formula of Concord, the doctrine of salvation through faith only is more fully elaborated, especially in Art. III: De Justitia Fidei. A brief chapter, De Fide, appears in the First Helvetic, and one much more extensive in the Second Helvetic Conf. (XVI) in which faith is formally defined as not a human opinion and persuasion, but a most firm confidence and clear and steady assent of the mind, a most certain apprehension of the truth of God, and therefore of God himself as the highest good, and especially of the divine promise and of Christ who is the crown of all promises—omnium promissionum colophon. The Belgic Confession (XXII) declares that the Holy Ghost kindleth in our hearts an upright faith, which embraces Jesus Christ with all his merits, appropriates him and seeks nothing more besides him. . . . Faith is the instrument which holds us in communion with him in all his benefits,—which benefits, when they become ours, are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins. Declarations of the same tenor appear in nearly all the creeds, and most elaborately in those of latest date, such as the Canons of Dort and the Irish Articles which (37) define justifying faith as not only the common belief of the tenets of the Christian religion and persuasion of the truth of the Word of God in general, but also a particular application of the gracious promises of the Gospel to the comfort of our own souls, whereby we lay hold on Christ with all his benefits.

Such statements prepare us to appreciate the terse definition in the Shorter Catechism: Faith in Jesus Christ is *a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation* as he is offered to us in the Gospel. The Larger Catechism (72) declares that this saving grace is wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God,—that it carries with it a profound conviction of sin and misery, and of spiritual disability and exposure to eternal loss without Christ,—that it inspires assent to the truth and promises of the Gospel, and leads the sinner to rest on Christ and his righteousness for the pardon of sin and for acceptance in

the sight of God unto salvation. The Confession in the chapter now under examination commences with a declaration that saving faith is *the work of the Spirit in the heart*, and is wrought ordinarily, and also strengthened when once received, by the ministry of the Word and by the right use of the sacraments and of prayer. The principal acts of such faith are admirably enumerated as *accepting*, *receiving and resting upon Christ alone* for justification, sanctification and eternal life. Elsewhere it is affirmed that the Christian *believeth whatsoever is revealed in the Word*, for the authority of God himself speaking therein, and acts according to whatever is there taught. Similar distinctions and definitions appear at many other points in the Symbols, specially in conjunction with what is said respecting the mediation of Christ. Grouping all these statements together, we discern here another illustration of that elaboration and fullness, and that philosophic exactness in language and expression, which give the Symbols of Westminster such marked prominence among the formularies of Protestantism.

Like the phrase, *saving* understanding, employed to describe something more and higher than mere natural discernment of religious truth, the phrase, *saving* faith, was employed by the Assembly (Minutes, 276) to distinguish such faith from all other and subordinate uses of the term, such as intellectual faith in the Bible and its teachings, the faith of miracles, the faith of devils or of angels, false faith, or (in an objective sense) the truth on which trust is reposed—the faith once delivered to the saints. It was used by the advocates of Rome in the age of Luther and subsequently, to signify rather an implicit reliance on the church, the sacraments, the priesthood, as the immediate sources of salvation. The Council of Trent indeed affirms in general (Ch. VIII. in the Decree on Justification) that faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification; yet in the same connection it speaks of the sacrament of baptism as the instrumental cause of such justification, represents priestly absolution as an essential condition, and declares such good works as the church imposes, to be indispensable signs and evidences that the soul is justified. The ninth canon under the Decree on the Sacraments pronounces the anathema of the church upon any one who shall say that in the three sacraments, baptism and confirmation and order or ordination, there is not imprinted on the soul receiving them a character—that is, a certain spiritual and indelible sign of grace and salvation. While that astute Council did not attempt to justify the particular abuses, such as the sale of indulgences, which Luther and his associates were so strongly

opposing, it still clung to that subtle dogma of justification in and through the church which stands in dark antithesis over against the nobler conception of a justification wrought out through Christ alone, and received and appropriated by faith in him only.

Protestantism agreed in placing such faith in Christ and his mediatorial work in the foreground, as distinct from all trust in church or sacrament or priest on one hand, and from all confidence in self or in human worth or virtue on the other:—such faith including on one side implicit belief in the testimony of the Scriptures concerning the Messiah in all his mediating offices and relations, and on the other side a final, complete, irrevocable trust in the salvation thus provided, and an absolute commitment of the soul to this Savior to be saved in this way and in this way only. In the terse phrase of Edwards (on Justification) faith includes the whole act of unition to Christ as a Savior. Christian faith, says Bushnell, is the faith of a transaction—the trusting of ourselves as beings to a Being, to be by him governed and possessed forever. On this one condition salvation was made by all true Protestants to turn: faith in Christ only, was the article, not merely of a standing or a falling church as Luther declared, but of a redeemed or ruined soul also. The Confession recognizes the fact that such faith may be strong in one disciple and weak in another, and that it may *be often and many ways assailed or weakened:* and is careful also to teach that such faith is not in the best case a meritorious ground of salvation, but is itself a gift of God, *wrought in the believer* by the Spirit and the Word, and is a divinely imposed condition simply—a condition without whose presence salvation cannot be attained. The Larger Catechism (73) specially guards against error at this point in the statement that faith does not justify because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works which are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith was itself imputed for justification, as the earlier Arminianism had suggested; but *only as it is an instrument* by which the believer receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness. Reynolds in one of his sermons before the Assembly aptly said that faith justifies as a window is said to enlighten a room, because it is most apt (fitted) to let in that light which comes from another body. How far such a spiritual conception rises above the subtle and misleading decrees and canons of Trent, or above any doctrine of grace which more recent Catholicism has enunciated, it is not difficult for the careful student to see.

Two specific topics here demand brief consideration: the

reasonableness of saving faith, and its peculiar value as an active force in character and in religious living. In the general sense of confidence or trust, faith underlies the entire life of man. In its most subjective form, it is reliance upon the action of our own rational faculties—trust in ourselves as real and thinking persons. Objectively, it is the assurance we feel respecting what lies beyond ourselves, as the existence of an external world, the laws of nature, the impersonal forces at work about us. In the Catechism of Cyril Lucaris, there is a striking statement of the presence and office of faith in the ordinary life of man: Everything which is done in the world, even by men who are unconnected with the Church, is done by faith. Agriculture is founded on faith: for one who did not believe that he should gather in the increase of the fruits of the earth, would not undertake the labor of husbandry. Mariners are guided by faith when the intrust their fate to a slight plank, and prefer the agitation of the unstable waters to the more stable element of the earth. They retain for themselves nothing but faith, to which they trust more than to any anchor.—Faith in man involves another element, confidence in his judgment and his voluntary and moral nature,—a confidence which underlies all human action and fellowship, and without which human society in its varied forms could not exist. Such reliance is as natural to man as his own breathing, and in some variety it flows into and becomes an active principle in all human life. Religious faith, speaking broadly, is simply this instinctive and comprehensive trust in that which lies outside of ourselves, and especially in our fellow men, elevated and applied specifically to God,—the soul resting comprehensively on his character, his administration, his revealed grace. In its highest, its saving form, it is such confidence in God in view of sin and condemnation,—an assurance that he is able to deliver, and that in Christ he does deliver those who believe on him from all sinfulness and guilt, and an unreserved casting of the soul on his plan of mercy as the only provision for restoration to holiness and to the divine favor and fellowship. In this aspect saving faith is not a single volition or a transient act, or—as Lessing held—a temporary leaning on authority until reason is developed, or any merely provisional stage in the intellectual or moral life; but rather a permanent state of the soul—a holy condition or disposition, which henceforth animates the whole man forever, and determines alike his acts and his character for all the future.

5. Saving faith reasonable: its power in character and life.

Viewed in the calmest, most philosophic aspect, such trust as this is the most reasonable action which man, contemplated as a sinner, can ever perform. There are indeed expressions in the Symbols and in other Protestant creeds, and there is much in Protestant theology, earlier and later, which would imply that such trust is an act of the soul altogether above and beyond reason—if indeed it be not even an act against which the natural reason protests. The language of Paul in his Corinthian letters, and also some utterances of our Lord himself, are quoted in the support of such opinions. But the deeper, wiser view compels a careful correction of such statements and interpretations. It is true that, in the phrase of Coleridge, reason has its own horizon, while religious faith has another and broader horizon, so that those who exercise such faith are enabled to discern truth, to perceive and rest upon divine verities, which the natural man may not discern, or which to his narrower understanding may seem to be foolishness. Yet in the largest sense there is nothing either in the objects thus discerned by an intelligent faith, or in the act of accepting these objects as real and resting absolutely upon them for time and for eternity, against which clarified and calm reason will ever protest. The Christian compromises nothing in his rational nature when he determines to believe in the verities of our holy religion, and to live on the hypothesis that they are true, true now and true forever. In this sense he may, in the language of an apostle, give a reason to every man who asks for a rational justification of the faith that is in him. Just as we may firmly maintain that there are no intrinsic contradictions between the teachings of Scripture and the philosophy or the science of men within the same departments of knowledge, so we may in the broadest sense maintain the glorious reasonableness, not merely of the doctrines we cherish, but of the absolute and happy commitment of ourselves and our destinies to what by the help of the Spirit of God we thus discern and believe.

That such faith is this, when admitted into the breast, becomes at once not only a permanent state or disposition of the soul, but also a powerful operative force in character, and a dominating temper in the moral life, is obvious. In the language of the first Helvetic Conf. such faith doth first send out of itself charity, and then very excellent fruits of all virtues. There is indeed a degree of justice in the criticism made upon the Symbols and on the Protestant formularies generally, to the effect that they represent faith too much on its passive side, as a simple receiving and reposing on the promises of God in the Gospel

—an inert and inoperative resting on Christ and his grace, which leaves nothing for the soul further to do or bear in the interest of its salvation. But the vital fact is that saving faith is a voluntary and a moral as well as an intellectual matter, both explicit and implicit; that the will and the conscience as truly as the sentiment of trust become engaged in it; that in a word, it involves and possesses the entire man, and animates with new energy his thoughts, his feelings, his purposes, his entire life. A holy concord becomes at once apparent between his perceptions, his emotions, and his will; and thus converted, the man begins at once to show the electric energy of such faith in all his actions, and throughout his moral living.

History tells us what faith, in the general sense of the term, has done for men and for the world,—what mighty works it has performed, what victories it has won, what vast changes it has wrought and is continually working in ordinary life. But when a genuinely religious faith enters into the soul—when that soul truly believes and rests upon what God has revealed, and in all sincerity intrusts itself forevermore to the Savior and the salvation made known to it in the Gospel, then there enters into the mind, the heart, the character, an energy mightier than any which it is possible for the natural man to experience. The writer to the Hebrews has presented no exaggerated picture of what such faith has actually accomplished, pathetic beyond all comparison and almost incredible as his statements seem. The sublime fact is that similar results are actually reached in our age and in every age as truly as in the periods of which the apostle wrote; faith still, as in the stormy era of the Reformation, subdues kingdoms, works righteousness, obtains or verifies and experiences the promises, and in multiplied ways proves its actual and supreme potency in human life. Such faith is an abiding inspiration in the soul: it continually works by love, and purifies both the heart and the conduct; it is the fount from which all other holy graces and virtues flow, and the perpetual spring of all Christian living. A truly Christian manhood becomes possible only through the possession and the influence of such faith, as an active force resident in the very centers of the moral nature. While therefore we may and should emphasize the passive side of saving faith —the element of acceptation and repose in the salvation offered, as if that salvation were a strong vessel sent to convey the soul through whatever tempestuous seas into the haven of eternal rest, we are bound to lay equal stress on this faith, regarded as an active power, penetrating the entire man, and moving him on with

superhuman energy to such Christian living and fruitfulness as will demonstrate both its reality and its preciousness. It is only as we contemplate faith on this side of it that we are enabled to see clearly why it is laid down as a primal and indispensable condition of salvation; thus viewed, it explains away all difficulties, illuminates the mystery of regeneration, shows what conversion is and means, and renders the conception of the Christianized Life the grandest vision vouchsafed to man this side of heaven.

6. Repentance defined: its essential elements.

The remarkable chapter on Saving Faith is followed in the Confession by an equally important chapter (XV) entitled, *Of Repentance unto Life*. It has been a question among theologians whether faith or repentance should be considered first in the order of scientific exposition. Both Catechisms follow the order preferred in the Confession, and this is the more general usage. Calvin affirms (Inst. B. III: 4) that repentance not only follows faith, but is produced by it. But his subsequent discussion shows that repentance and conversion were regarded by him as nearly synonymous: it is also apparent that he uses the term, faith, in a sense so comprehensive as to include that godly sorrow for sin and that sincere purpose to forsake sin which constitute evangelical repentance. It was natural that the Reformers, in their ardent struggles against the false conception of faith held by the papal church, should centralize and exalt faith, in the nobler sense of the term, as the comprehensive and the sole condition of salvation. And it may have been feared that the introduction of repentance as in some sense a coördinate condition, might lead to an undue emphasizing, as indeed appeared in the primitive Arminianism, of the human factor in the scheme of grace. Later theologians have held that faith is the means while repentance is the end, and that while faith ever leads on to repentance, repentance may not lead to or result in saving faith. It has been held also that the reversal of this order involves certain injurious consequences, such as the conceiving of repentance as a legal act, and the interposing it as such between the soul and Christ as the object of trust and the foundation of hope.

In fact, it is difficult to establish clearly a chronologic order in the case, since each experience involves and presupposes the other. To repent of sin and to believe in Christ as a Savior from sin are really two aspects of one and the same spiritual transaction. As Bunyan has taught us in his great allegory, it is only when the

sinner stands before the cross and discerns the Savior crucified, that he throws off the burden of his sin, and sees it rolling away. Some recognition of Christ, and some measure of appropriating faith must thus be involved in all true repentance. On the other hand, such recognizing and appropriating faith seems to require as its condition some deep consciousness of sin and guilt and impending doom, such as will impel the convicted soul to look away unto Jesus for the deliverance it needs. The practical fact is that no one repents worthily except in the sight and vision of Christ as a possible Savior from sin; nor does any one truly attain the sight and vision of Christ without finding his wicked nature subdued within him, and his eyes filled with penitential tears. Whether, therefore, we place faith first and repentance subsequent, as the Symbols do, or reverse the order of the two elements, we should never forget that both are in reality parts of the same gracious experience, logically set in a certain procession, but chronologically and spiritually one and inseparable. So we should ever interpret the tender injunction so often repeated in the New Testament: Repent and Believe.

The biblical conception of acceptable repentance is well defined in the language (87) of the Shorter Catechism:—a saving grace whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, *doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God* with full purpose of and *endeavor after new obedience.* The Larger Catechism (76) expands the definition in terms, but adds nothing except that this saving grace is said to be *wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God.* The Confession emphasizes the sense of *the filthiness and odiousness of sin* as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and defines the scope of repentance in the declaration that the penitent soul is henceforth resolved *to walk with God in all the ways of his commandments.* Other descriptive phrases appear in the Minutes; 279, and elsewhere. Such an experience is of course to be radically differentiated from all experiences that might seem to be in any way related to it;—from natural regret arising from some perception of the loss or other harmful consequence, providential or retributive, that may be following after indulgence in transgression;—from moral remorse, the sting of outraged conscience, in view not so much of evil results flowing from a sinful course, but rather of the intrinsic wrong, the sense of wickedness in the sight of the personal reason and judgment, that must rise up occasionally in every soul not seared and deadened by personal sin;—also from what may be termed penitence,

such as that of Judas, springing up in the form of intense conviction, and even of despair, in the contemplation of sin as committed before God. These experiences doubtless exist in numberless instances, and in measures more or less marked, even where the Bible has never gone to convince men of sin and righteousness and judgment, and still more often among the multitudes who have heard its faithful testimony but have still been unwilling to turn away from their transgressions. They are never to be confounded with that biblical repentance which, in the phrase of Paul, is not to be repented of—the repentance *unto life*.

Calvin has comprehensively defined acceptable repentance as a true conversion of our life to God, proceeding from a sincere and serious fear of God, and consisting in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit. The Augsburg Confession (Art. XII) says: Repentance consisteth properly of two parts; one is contrition, or terrors stricken into the conscience through the acknowledgment (or recognition) of sin; the other is faith, which is conceived by the Gospel, and doth believe that for the sake of Christ sins be forgiven, and comforteth the conscience and freeth it from terrors. The Catechism of Heidelberg defines repentance as twofold; the dying of the old man and the quickening of the new,—heartfelt sorrow for sin on the one side, causing us to hate it and turn from it always more and more,—heartfelt joy in God on the other side, causing us to take delight in living according to the will of God in all good works. The Second Helvetic Conf. teaches that repentance is a change of heart produced in a sinner by the word of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit, and includes a knowledge of native and actual depravity, a godly sorrow and hatred of sin, and a determination to live hereafter in virtue and holiness. Repentance, say the Irish Articles (40), is a gift of God whereby godly sorrow is wrought in the heart of the faithful for offending God, their merciful Father, through their former transgressions, together with a constant resolution for the time to come to cleave unto God and to lead a new life. One of the Confessions embodies the whole in the simple declaration, that true repentance is turning to God and all good, and turning away from the devil and all evil. Nearly all of the Protestant creeds contain similar definitions, though with some confusion in many cases between repentance and faith on one hand, and repentance and conversion as a consequence of faith on the other.

Recurring to the Westminster definition, which is more full and exact than any of its predecessors in the confessional series, we

find the substance of repentance to consist in the two elements, conviction and renunciation;—the first implying a deep and adequate sense of sin, not merely as an offense to the conscience or reason, but as a transgression of the law of God, and a crime against him as our Father and our King;—the second implying the actual forsaking of all sin as an element in the life, and a solemn purpose to walk henceforth in the ways of holiness, in obedience full and cordial to all divine commands. And we are further taught that this doctrine of repentance is to be *preached by every minister of the Gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ*, on the ground that this evangelical grace, as it is termed, is an essential element always in true piety: *none may expect pardon without it.* To emphasize the obligation, we are told on one side that the smallest sin unrepented of deserves damnation, and on the other that the greatest sin may be forgiven to those who truly repent. Still further, it is enjoined that men should not content themselves with merely general sorrow for their sinfulness, but should repent each one for himself *of his particular sins, particularly:* and this is to be done, not because the sinner can render any satisfaction for his sins or purchase pardon by way of merit in consequence of such repentance, but because God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, as it is his supreme right to command. It will be seen that these statements cover the whole ground, as it had not been covered by any antecedent symbol; and it is a suggestive fact that the solemn and searching doctrine here enjoined has not been modified in any particular by more recent investigation. Now as in the era of the Assembly, and through all the future, such repentance must remain in its fullness as one of the indispensable elements in the gracious process of salvation.

7. Protestant and Papal doctrines contrasted: Confession of Sin.

It may be profitable, before passing to consider other interesting features of the Christian Life as described in the Symbols, to note briefly the marked spiritual contrast between this Protestant doctrine of repentance and the Roman Catholic conception. The Roman analysis of repentance presents three elements, *attritio cordis, confessio oris, satisfactio operis.* The analysis is worthy of careful study, and the definition derived from it might, so far as the language goes, be accepted by Protestants as adequate. The attritio cordis, or contrition of spirit in view of sin, is an essential element in evangelical repentance: so also are the confessio oris, the acknowledgment of our transgressions before God; and the satisfactio operis, or the desire to make reparation for any offense against

him or against our fellow men. He in whom these three elements are found, if the language is interpreted in a proper biblical sense, may justly be regarded as a penitent soul such as God in the Gospel has promised to pardon and to save. But we are constrained to ask whether this contrition of spirit be indeed the genuine and deep conviction which the Scriptures require, or is rather the unprofitable penitence of men like Esau or Judas, or mere remorse of conscience, or natural regret simply, or—what is still inferior—a sense of shame or humiliation in view of some departure from the imposed requisitions of the church. We may properly inquire whether this confession of the mouth is that hearty and unreserved acknowledgment before God for sins committed against his holy law which he requires, or is merely a confession to the priesthood, imposed as a condition of receiving the mass—a confession covering only minor offenses against ecclesiastical law, or perchance an acknowledgment of some relatively trivial form of wrong-doing. So we may justly ask whether the satisfaction in act is that cordial disposition to undo all evil done, to forsake all sin as related to others, to live a truly holy life in obedience to the divine commands, or is simply some partial and perfunctory reparation, or submission to some form of penance in person or purse, required by the church as a condition of restoration to her favor.

In pressing these questions it would be an obvious departure from the Protestant doctrine of the communion of saints, to affirm that evangelical repentance is an experience unknown within the papal fold, or to declare that there are but few within that fold whom God regards as truly penitent before him, and in his grace accepts exactly as he accepts us. Unquestionably there are wide differences of penitential experience within the church of Rome, specially in countries where greater enlightenment has been enjoyed, and in ages such as our own in which there has been marked spiritual advance universally, among Romanists as well as others, in the apprehension and appropriation of saving truth, and particularly of the covenanted mercy of God in Christ. Though no formal change in dogma has been made since the Council of Trent, as indeed none can well be made, constituted as the Roman organism is, we may strongly hope that the true doctrine finds its way into many hearts within that communion, and that many such as Pascal and Madame Guion may fitly kneel by our side, as we bow before God and with contrition of soul and confession of guilt cast ourselves at his feet, pleading for mercy in the name of Christ, our Lord and theirs.

Yet the painful fact remains that the biblical doctrine on this vital subject has not received, is not now receiving, just recognition in the Roman communion. When Luther hurled his theses like cannon-shot against that corrupt and corrupting scheme of penance and indulgence and absolution represented by men like Tetzel, he assailed an evil against which the intelligent mind and conscience of Europe had long protested, and which, if it had been allowed to continue and flourish without rebuke as it did in his day, would have been fatal ultimately to Christianity itself. A radical reformation of such unbiblical teaching and practice was an indispensable prerequisite to the restoration of vital piety within the church, and such reformation was possible only through the enunciation afresh and with utmost force of the inspired truth that God alone can forgive sin, that forgiveness is attainable only through faith in Christ and his mediation, and that no other price is demanded, no other condition acceptable, than such faith cherished in the soul, apart from all churchly merit or interposition. The Tridentine Council saw clearly the justice and wisdom of such a claim, and therefore in form withdrew the countenance of the church from the gross corruptions which had shocked the moral sense of Europe, while still affirming the right of the church to determine wherein true repentance consists, and the necessary instrumentality of the church in securing forgiveness and absolution to the truly penitent. One has only to read the particular decrees and canons relating to this subject, and especially the chapters on contrition, on confession and absolution, and on the satisfaction requisite in view of sin, to be impressed on the one side with the astuteness and skill of the statements, and on the other with the dangerous errors interwoven with the essential truth in the case. Nor can it be doubted by the thoughtful student that, in the strenuous endeavor of the Council to preserve in unimpaired force the prerogatives and assumed functions of the church in the whole matter of repentance and forgiveness, irreparable violence was done to the plain, simple, solemn doctrine as set forth by our Lord and his apostles. Later teachers such as Moehler (Symbolism, 219, *seq.*) have taught that proper contrition involves a profound detestation of sin, springing out of the awakened love of God, together with the conscious, deliberate determination never more to sin, but rather to fulfill the divine law from and in love for God. It has also been maintained that confession to the priesthood is only a mode of confessing to God through their official instrumentality, that the penances imposed by the church are temporal punishments

only, and that the absolution bestowed by the church is simply her authoritative testimony that God has granted forgiveness to the sinner through her mediation. Yet no such melioration can do away with the dangerous doctrine of Trent, or protect the church of Rome from the recurrence of those detestable practices against which the Reformation was such an indignant protest. Even Moehler claims that the church has the right not only to pronounce absolution but also to grant indulgences, and that these, if dispensed with wisdom, are useful.

In connection with the Roman dogma as to auricular confession, with its consequent ecclesiastical absolution, it is well to notice especially the important section (vi) on this subject in the chapter now under examination. That section strongly affirms the obligation of every man to confess his sins before God privately, and assures the true penitent that for all sin thus privately confessed he shall receive mercy, and without any intervention of the priesthood or of the church. But where he has *scandalized his brother or the church of Christ*, he ought to be willing—it is said—also to confess his fault to the brother wronged, or publicly before the church, and so *declare his repentance to those that are offended.* In the Directory for Worship formal provision is made (Ch. XI) for the receiving of such public confession, and for such action by the church as a proper acknowledgement of sin may justify—specially in the interest of reconciliation and restoration. This is as far as the Reformed communions generally have gone in the matter of ecclesiastical forgiveness. The language of some of the earlier creeds, specially the Catechism of Luther, and the Augsburg Conf. (Art. IV), seem indeed like an approach to the papal heresy as to both confession and clerical absolution. Luther is quoted as saying that a minister preaching the Gospel cannot open his mouth without constantly remitting sin, for the reason that the Gospel itself is a proclamation of the sin of all men remitted through the atonement: and the Apologia affirms that absolution is the Gospel itself—our sins being truly remitted here on earth, through the power of the keys intrusted to the church. Zwingli, however (52–5), declares in his emphatic way that God alone remits sin, and remits it solely through Christ,—that confession, if made to a priest, is not for the remission of sins through him but for consultation only,—that works of satisfaction may not be imposed by the priesthood as a condition of absolution,—and that those who demand any pecuniary rewards for such absolution are followers of Balaam and Simon, and veritable legates of Satan. Calvin pronounces the papal doctrine of confession and absolution

a mortal poison, denies that the right to absolve men from sin is any part of the legitimate power of the keys, and denounces the imposing of penance and the sale of indulgences as not only pollution and imposture but also rapacity and robbery. Yet he strenuously enjoins private or personal as distinct from auricular confession, commends the public acknowledgement of sin before the church where such sin has been a wrong to others, and in glowing terms proclaims the readiness of God to forgive all the sins of all men, in the name of Christ, when these are duly acknowledged before him and heartily renounced.

8. Good Works: nature and worth. Catholic and Protestant statements.

The chapter, *Of Good Works* (XVI) which immediately follows those on Saving Faith and Repentance unto Life, brings into view another of those broad and deep lines which divided Protestantism from the church of Rome, and at the same time sets before us what is an ultimate sign and test of the truly Christian life. The radical error in which Romanism had become entangled through its false doctrine respecting faith and repentance, bore its legitimate and poisonous fruitage at this point, in a low and unspiritual conception of what constitutes the Christian man in action—of the marks and evidences by which he may be distinguished experimentally and fundamentally from the merely natural man. Hence it was necessary that the Reformers should not only exemplify in themselves that loftier type of manhood which, as they claimed, the doctrine of salvation through Christ only would surely induce in all who received it, but should also formulate their belief in a definition of the works, the acts, the practical living which are the proper signs of such a manhood when shaped and animated by the Holy Ghost. This was a fundamental necessity, and was so regarded by the Protestant leaders almost without exception. All were agreed in repudiating the papal conception of good works as inadequate and corrupting: all realized that some suitable substitute, which would stand the test both of Scripture and of experiment, must be provided. Nor is it too much to say that, if Protestantism had not furnished such a broad and noble doctrine of Christian manhood, and if its adherents had not in a remarkable degree illustrated that doctrine by their personal living, their good works shining as bright examples in the household and in society as well as within the church, the Protestant movement would have collapsed and become a terrible failure. It was indeed the grandest mission of the Reformers to live out the doctrine of justification

by faith as well as to proclaim it in the ears of men: it was, in a word, their good works quite as much as their profound messages which attracted, which influenced, which won the peoples of central and northern Europe to their support. Such holy manhood, set in living contrast with the degenerate acts and lives of the majority of those who represented Rome in that fierce conflict for supremacy in European thought and faith, became an argument which even the might of the Papacy was powerless to resist.

The Council of Trent was not indifferent to so important an issue, as its declarations in regard to the nature of good works, and their merit in connection with justification (Decree on Justif. Chap. XVI and the corresponding Canons) clearly show. It was charged upon the Protestants by the Council that in emphasizing justification by faith they were ignoring and even forbidding good works, and thus proving recreant to the moral element in Christianity. And it was in view of that charge specifically, that the framers of the Augsburg Confession introduced the long Article (XX) into their symbol, in which on one side they condemn the childish and needless and unprofitable works, ceremonial and formal, imposed by the Roman priesthood, and on the other side assert their loyalty to the Ten Commandments, and all other moral obligations enjoined in the holy Scriptures. They do, indeed, affirm with emphasis that even such works cannot reconcile God to us or deserve the remission of sins, and that every one who trusteth by his works to merit grace, does in effect despise the merit of Christ, and his plan of salvation. They declare that while conscience cannot be quieted by any works, but by faith alone, yet such works are obligatory, because it is the will of God that we should do them; and add the important statement that it is only by faith, dwelling as a living principle in the soul, that any works acceptable with God can be performed. To quiet the controversy which subsequently arose in Lutheran circles, one party affirming that good works in the biblical sense of the term are necessary, the other maintaining that they are even detrimental to salvation, the Formula of Concord, nearly fifty years later, presented another elaborate Article (IV), in which it was said that good works, in the best sense of the phrase, must as certainly follow a true faith as fruits of a good tree, and that all regenerate persons are debtors to do such good works; yet that such obedience is to be rendered, not by the compulsion of law, but in a free and spontaneous spirit; and such works are said to be necessary, not because they merit salvation in any way, but simply because they are a testimony that the Holy Spirit is

present and dwells in us—a sure sign that we, unworthy though we may be, are saved already.

It would be impracticable here to speak of the teaching of the various Reformed symbols, nearly all of which enunciate the same doctrine with less or greater elaboration, and with incidental shadings and variations. Zwingli had given the keynote in his terse declaration (22) that our works are good so far as they are of Christ, but so far as they are ours, they are not truly good. The Heidelberg Catechism, in a declaration almost equally terse, responded in the statement that the only good works are those which are done from true faith, according to the law of God, and for his glory, and not such as rest on our own opinions or the commandments of men. In harmony with these declarations are the First Helvetic (XIV), eminently the Second Helvetic (Cap. XVI), the French Confession (22-24), in which may be traced the personal dictation of Calvin, the Belgic (Art. XXIV), and the Scotch Confession (XIII-XIV), with the quaint titles, Of the Cause of Gude Warkis, and What Warkis are Reputit Gude befoir God. The language of the Thirty-nine Articles (XII) may be quoted here, as representing the maturest British thought in the latter half of the sixteenth century: Albeit that good works which are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgment, yet they are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit. This Article has the greater significance to us from the fact that it was incorporated almost literally into those Irish Articles, which have already been recognized in other connections as the germ of the Westminster Symbols, and also into the Articles of Religion drawn up two centuries later by John Wesley for the guidance of American Methodism.

Turning now in the light shed by these antecedent creeds to the teaching of our own Symbols as contained in this chapter, and in the corresponding statements in the Catechisms, we may note, first, the definition of good works with which the discussion commences,—*only such as God hath commanded in his holy Word*, and not such as without the warrant of Scripture are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intention. This definition was evidently designed to rule out, not merely all papal error, but also certain false opinions which had found currency in Protestant circles, especially through the

9. Good Works: doctrine of the Symbols: its value.

Arminian defection. In the exposition of the third petition in the prayer of our Lord, we find an admirable statement of the doctrine in the proposition (192), that we are to pray that God by his Spirit and grace would make us able and willing to know, do and submit to his will in all things, with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity and constancy as the angels do in heaven.

Secondly: the real nature of such good works as the *fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith;* by which believers may manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the Gospel, stop the mouths of adversaries, and glorify God by their obedience to his will. It will be seen at a glance that such an interpretation shuts out at once the kind of works, ceremonial and ecclesiastical, which the Council of Trent had prescribed, and on the other hand proves the falsity of the papal charge that the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith was injurious to practical religion, inasmuch as it tended to turn the thoughts of men away from those duties which God had enjoined in his holy law. It was a decisive answer also to that Antinomianism which affirmed that good works have no relation to salvation, and to that still more dangerous opinion developed during the Majoristic controversy, that such works may even be detrimental to salvation. It was also an answer equally decisive to the notion developed during the same controversy and afterward, that good works are in some degree a coördinate or at least a subsidiary ground of acceptance with God, since none can in fact perform such works excepting those who are already accepted of him.

Thirdly: the source of all good and acceptable works is said to be the *actual influence of the Holy Spirit*,—the ability to do such works lying not in the believer independently, but flowing into him supernaturally in conjunction with his faith in Christ. According to one statement proposed in the Assembly, it is the Spirit of Christ in regenerate persons that enables them to do all that good which at any time they do, and they are so far from having any strength in themselves for holy performances that, notwithstanding the grace they have already received, there is always required a continued influence from the same holy and blessed Spirit, to work in them to will and to do: Minutes, 277–8. The important caution is added, that this must not be regarded as an excuse for negligence in duty, nor is the believer to wait for some special motion of the Spirit before entering upon the performance of any known duty. Supreme dependence on God for aid is not

to be regarded as inconsistent with the completest devotion of the soul to every appointed task: the promise of such supernatural aid is rather to be viewed as supplying the strongest possible stimulus and encouragement to the performance of all recognized obligation. It is implied in these statements that such good works, wrought in grace, are not occasional acts or temporary efforts, but constitute rather the great business of life, and are to be persisted in without ceasing and without questioning while life lasts.

Fourthly: works done by the believer under the inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit, are *acceptable with God;* not indeed because they are always done perfectly or without fault or blemish in his sight—since this will never be in this life—but in virtue of their spiritual worth, viewed as signs of personal union with Christ and of an indwelling disposition to obey him. As the person of the regenerate man is accepted and counted as righteous in his justification, so his works are regarded as worthy though they be accompanied—*defiled and mixed*—with many weaknesses and imperfections. We bless God, say the Articles of the English Synod, that the obedience of Christians, though in this life always imperfect, yet being the fruit of their union with Christ, is accepted for his sake and well-pleasing to God.

Fifthly: although thus acceptable with God in Christ, such works can never *merit pardon or eternal life*, so great is the disproportion between them even at the best and the claim which God rightly has upon the powers and services of all, and so glorious and precious is that eternal life as seen in contrast with the holiest living of saints on the earth. At the best the Christian has but done his duty, and must confess himself an unprofitable servant, unworthy of divine favor or of everlasting felicity. It follows that no Christian can ever do more than his proper duty—more than God justly requires: works of supererogation, such as Rome exalted into prominence as constituting a species of claim upon divine justice or mercy, are declared to be impossible: no man can do more for God than he ought. The proposition was at one stage of the discussion adopted by the Assembly (278), that those who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are yet so far from being able to supererogate and to do more than God requires, as that they are never able to do so much as in duty they are bound to do.

Sixthly: Works *done by unregenerate men*, though they may spring from good moral incentives and may be beneficent or upright in the estimate of others, can never merit pardon or

acceptance with God. Such works, it is said, do not proceed from a heart purified by faith, nor do they conform to the letter or the spirit of Scripture, regarded as the supreme law of human life. The sound position is taken that all such works, however excellent in themselves, are in fact sinful and displeasing to God, and therefore cannot render him who performs them meet to receive grace from God. Yet it is added, though it be an apparent paradox, that the neglect of such works is still more sinful, still more displeasing. The teaching of this section has been severely criticised on the ground that it does injustice to the really worthy deeds of beneficence or of righteousness which are done by persons as yet unrenewed in heart. The Declaratory Act of the United Church affirms that it is not to be held that the natural man cannot perform actions in any sense good, although actions which do not spring from a renewed heart are not spiritually good or holy—such as accompany salvation. In the proposed Revision of the Confession, the language and structure of the section were so modified as to escape this criticism, as follows: Works done by unregenerate men, although they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others, and although the neglect of such things is sinful and displeasing unto God, yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word, nor to a right end, the glory of God, do not meet the requirements of the divine law, and hence they cannot be pleaded as a ground of acceptance with God.

Regarded as a whole, this chapter furnishes a marked example of that calm discrimination on the one side and that comprehensive summarizing of essential truth on the other, of which there are so many illustrations in the Symbols. No important element of the doctrine was forgotten or omitted, and there was no error current anywhere in the Protestant churches which was not carefully eliminated. The controversies which had agitated and divided the earlier Protestantism, especially on the continent, were wisely quieted, and this was done without compromise or surrender of anything needful to the biblical doctrine. The alleged conflict between Paul and James, between the gospel of faith and the gospel of service, is here shown to have no real existence. The erroneous teachings and corrupt practices of Rome are all faithfully excluded. And surely it is a fine commentary on both the substance and the form of the statement, that after two centuries and a half it still stands out as the clearest, fullest, wisest declaration that the Christian Church has ever made

on this vital theme. It brings the Christian life before us in its proper light, as a type of life in which faith and works, belief and duty, piety and service, are blended together in a harmony as complete as that of a rainbow in the sky.

Two other chapters remain to complete our view of that Life as furnished by the Symbols: of these the first is that (XVII) which treats *Of the Perseverance of the Saints*. Stated in another form, it is the intensely practical problem whether the Christian life, originating in the regenerative and effectual call of the Holy Spirit, animated not merely by intellectual conviction, but by a spiritual and saving faith, characterized by true sorrow for sin and a dominant purpose to renounce and forsake it, and consecrated to good works in the sense and measure just described, possesses the quality of permanence; or may in some instances give way to the grosser life of sin and death, so that the soul, once thus endowed and renewed, may fall back into an estate of guilt and of condemnation. The strong declaration of the Confession is that no such soul *can totally or finally fall away from the state of grace*, but will certainly *persevere therein to the end*, and be eternally saved. In the Larger Catechism (79) it is said that true believers can neither totally nor finally fall away from this gracious estate, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. And in the Shorter Catechism (36) such perseverance to the end is named as one of the essential and assured benefits which flow from or accompany our justification, adoption and sanctification. In other parts of the Confession (XI: v, XII: i, XIII: iii) we are taught that true believers are *never cast off*, but are sealed unto the day of redemption,—that although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, *the regenerate part doth overcome*,—and that though they may by their sins fall under the fatherly displeasure of God, and may not have the light of his countenance restored until they confess their sins, and renew their faith and repentance, *they can never fall from the state of justification*. The doctrine is expanded in a variety of specifications, in the Sum of Saving Knowledge: and in *Truth's Victory Over Error* it is said to be impossible for the elect to be seduced,—impossible not in respect of the will and power of the elect themselves, but in respect of the immutability of God's decree concerning them, and of his purpose to keep them powerfully against seduction.

10. Perseverance: the Christian Life permanent.

The history of the doctrine thus strongly stated, is one of deep, almost tragic interest. It had been charged by papal advocates that the Protestant dogma of justification by faith in what Christ had done for the believers, taken in conjunction with its strict doctrine of election, not only rendered good works useless, but ensured salvation, whatever sin the believer once justified might commit. The Council of Trent (Decree on Justif. Ch. XIII) affirmed in contrast that as regards the gift of perseverance, no one may herein promise himself anything as certain with an absolute certainty, though all ought to place and repose a most firm hope in the help of God. The Council further warned all believers by labors, by watchings, by almsdeeds, by prayers and oblations, by fastings and chastity, to work out their salvation in constant fear for the combat which yet remains with the flesh, the world and the devil, wherein they cannot be victorious but through the grace of God. This was a legitimate inference from the papal dogma that justification is not an act but a process, and a process which is never completed till sanctification is perfected in another life. The general position of Protestantism is informally stated in the Catechism of Luther: We pray that God would so guard and preserve us that the devil, the world and our own flesh may not deceive us, nor lead us into misbelief, despair or any other great shame or vice; and that, though we may be thus tempted, we may nevertheless finally prevail and gain the victory. So the Heidelberg Catechism in its definition of the doctrine of forgiveness of sins (56), declares that God for the sake of the satisfaction of Christ, will no more remember our sins, neither the sinful nature with which we have to struggle all our life long, but will graciously impart to us the righteousness of Christ, that we may nevermore come into condemnation. And the French Confession in the same spirit (XXI) declares that faith is not given to the elect only to introduce them into the right way, but also to make them continue in it to the end: as it is God who hath begun the work, he will also perfect it.

Yet the doctrine as presented in the Symbols can hardly be regarded as one of the formal tenets of Protestantism prior to the rise of the Arminian controversy. It was indeed urged by the original Arminians as an argument against the extreme Calvinism of their day, that its doctrine of election involved the absolute certainty that none of the elect would ever fall away, while—as they cautiously said—it has never been proved from Scripture (Remonstrance, Art. V) that grace once given can never be lost. The followers of Arminius thus joined with Catholicism in the

affirmation made first by Aquinas, that no one could have any certainty of his salvation except by a special revelation from heaven, and on what they claimed to be scriptural grounds maintained that a total and final falling away from grace is always possible. This position was in harmony with their strong protest against the Augustinian dogma of irresistible grace, and with their claim that election and condemnation are conditioned upon the foreknowledge of God, and are made to depend on the foreseen belief or unbelief of men. It was a marked and serious departure from the general teaching of the antecedent creeds, especially of the British Isles. The Thirty-Nine Articles (XVII) had declared that the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ is full of pleasant, sweet and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, . . . because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation; and the Irish Articles, compiled while the controversy was in progress, taught that the elect of God are in time inseparably united unto Christ by the effectual and vital influence of the Holy Ghost. In the fifth Canon of the Synod of Dort, we have an elaborate, analytic, comprehensive statement of the doctrine, with full answers to the objections urged against it,—a statement which gave form to the Westminster declarations, and which has ever since stood as substantially the final answer of Calvinism to whatever species of opposition or criticism.

It is important to discriminate carefully between the inaccurate and the real grounds on which the fact of the permanence of the Christian life, once possessed, is based. *Not upon their own free will*, is the comprehensive caution to be noted in the case. It is not claimed that the certainty affirmed rests on any independent capacity or action of the believer: his regeneration and conversion may imply such permanence, but of themselves they can not ensure it. The renewed will is still a fallible and weak will and, were it left to itself, it would be liable, even certain, to fall away from God and duty. Nor is it claimed that present sinlessness or perfection, were it attained by the Christian in this life, would be a sufficient guarantee against ultimate apostacy. At the same time it may justly be held that such a comprehensive spiritual work as is instituted in regeneration and carried on in sanctification, does of itself justify a strong presumption that such a work will not come to naught, but will rather be maintained so long as life lasts, even in defiance of all the adverse influences which from without and from within may be warring against it. Nor is this presumption fairly offset by the fact that even the best Christians commit sin, or by the further fact that some Christians

do fall into damnable sin, and even seem for a time to have lost wholly the grace that first renewed them. The chapter under examination admits the existence of such defection, points to the powerful temptations of Satan and the world, and to the prevalency of inward corruption, speaks of the neglect of preservative grace, declares that God is often displeased and his Spirit grieved by the lapse of believers into sin, and details the consequences of such lapse in the loss of spiritual graces and comforts, in the hardening of the heart, the wounding of conscience, the scandal wrought to the injury of other souls and of the church, and the judgments temporal as well as spiritual incurred by such apostacy.

Yet the chapter strongly affirms the doctrine of ultimate perseverance, and bases it where only it can properly be based, on the threefold divine ground revealed in the Bible. The first form of this divine assurance is, as the older Calvinism earnestly maintained, in *the immutability of the decree of election*, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father,—it being regarded as a blessed certainty that, when God has once chosen a soul and made it an heir of life eternal, he will not give up his holy purpose, or abandon the gracious work which he has once begun in its behalf. The second form of assurance is found in *the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ*, and in the character of that covenant of grace into which he has once entered with the believer,—it being judged a certain thing that, the plan of salvation having thus been applied in any case, and Christ and his mediation once accepted and enjoyed, he will not permit the believing soul to go away from him wholly and forever. The third ground—which indeed the earlier Calvinism did not sufficiently appreciate—is *the abiding of the Spirit* and the *seed of God within* the soul, the daily ministrations of the Holy Ghost in the interest of continued holiness,—it being held that, having regenerated that soul, and begun within it the work of santification, he will not give up the sacred task which he has once undertaken, but will carry it on, in defiance of temptations without and of infirmity and corruption within, until that work is completed in glory. It is from this threefold divine ground, not from anything in the believer, or anything that can be done by the believer in and of himself, that, in the phrase of the Confession, *ariseth the certainty* of the perseverance and final salvation of all true saints.

It is to be admitted that the Scriptures contain not only examples of saints who have fallen grievously from the faith, but also counsels and warnings which imply that all saints are liable

to such defection. It is also to be admitted that in practical life such defection is sometimes apparent,—professing believers falling into sin and living in it, and in some instances apparently dying in a state of entire apostacy. The primitive Arminians urged such objections to the doctrine with very great force, and the argument has been expanded and urged with even greater vigor in more modern times: see Watson, Institutes. Yet while John Wesley, in the Methodist Articles (XII) affirms that after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given and fall into sin, he also quotes the language of the Thirty-Nine Articles, that by the grace of God we may arise again and amend our lives. And while he would maintain as an abstract proposition the possibility of an utter and final lapse, or at least say with Arminius that it has not been proved from Scripture that grace once given can never be lost, still American Methodism, at least in our time, would be willing to leave the matter where John Wesley left it—resting as trustfully as the most ardent Calvinism in the probability, if not the certainty, that no truly converted soul will ever finally pass into a state of condemnation. The Canon of Dort declares, in language which the intense conflict of that age alone could warrant, that Satan abhors this doctrine, that the world ridicules it, and that the ignorant and hypocrites abuse and heretics oppose it. But we may cordially appropriate its further statement that the spouse of Christ hath always most tenderly loved and constantly defended this doctrine as an inestimable treasure; and that God against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her to continue this conduct to the end. The English Articles (Presbyterian) in the same faith, affirm that if any believers, departing from God through unwatchfulness and neglect of prayer, lapse into spiritual languor or fall into grievous sins, yet by the mercy of God who abideth faithful, they are not cast off, but are chastened for their backsliding, and through repentance restored to his favor so that they perish not.

11. Assurance of Salvation: nature and ground: its relation to faith.

It is an interesting illustration of the earnest desire of the Westminster Assembly to make their doctrinal teachings in the highest measure practical and comforting to the church that, after having set forth the Christian Life in all these varied aspects, describing its origin in divine grace, its essential quality in faith, its characteristic repentance, its efflorescence in good works, and its

permanence and blessed perpetuity, they should add one chapter more (XVIII) to the series, under the title, *Of Assurance of Grace and Salvation*. Just as in this interest they seemed to interject the small but stimulating chapter on adoption between the two grand chapters on justification and sanctification, so here apparently for the comfort of believers they speak not merely of perseverance, but of the full, happy, perfect certitude to which the persevering saint may by grace attain. What is to follow in their scheme relates to the proper attitude and duty of the Christian within the sphere of law, his obligations to the civil power, to the church, and to his fellow men in various particulars. In this chapter we are led to linger a little longer in meditation on his inward state, as one of assurance of salvation.

Nothing is more remarkable among the Reformers as a class than their superb assurance not only of the truthfulness of the doctrines they advocated, but also of their personal salvation in and through the truth and the strong grace of Christ. History furnishes no worthier examples in any department of life, or in any age since the apostolic, of undaunted confidence, of the unswerving sense of security, of limitless hopefulness, than may be found among the men who framed the creeds, formulated the theologies, guided the religious life and activity of their day, and preached as if inspired. The evidence may be read alike in their sermons, their councils and their acts: it is manifest everywhere in their career, as if it were a gale of inspiration fresh from heaven. Yet no definite doctrine on the subject of assurance as distinct from faith worked its way into their formularies,—doubtless for the reason that the spiritual reality must first have been strongly experienced before it could be expressed in confessional form. Of faith, strong and joyous and invincible, we read much in the earlier creeds: the first Helv. Conf., for example, defining such faith as the certain and indubitable apprehension as to all those things that are to be hoped for from the grace of God. But of the assurance which is defined in the Westminster Symbols as *not of the essence of faith*, but rather as a higher and richer experience, a fruit and consummation of faith, which but few relatively do attain, we find only occasional traces. The elements of the doctrine are indeed apparent in such devotional creeds as the Catechism of Heidelberg, and in such trumpet-like declarations as the Scotch Confession, full of the strong passion of battle and the sense of victory. But it required a more reflective and discriminating age, one further removed from the direct strifes of the sixteenth century, to produce the doctrine itself in the full

form in which it appears in the Westminster creed. The debates on the subject in the Assembly (Minutes, 259, *seq*), show with what careful discrimination and what spiritual interest they formulated this striking chapter.

It is here dogmatically affirmed that the children of God may be *infallibly assured*, not only that they are actually in a state of grace now, but that they *shall persevere therein unto salvation*, L. C. 80. The important caution is added that such assurance, while in one aspect it is a development of saving faith, is *not of the essence of faith* in any such sense that none but those who consciously possess it may be regarded as true believers. This was the more important as neither Luther nor Calvin had recognized any broad distinction between faith and assurance. It is also admitted that such confidence may be *in divers ways shaken*, diminished and intermitted: and negligence and falling into special sins, and wounding the conscience by yielding to sudden temptation and manifold distempers, are named among these ways of impairing such assurance. It is even said that God may *withdraw the light of his countenance*, and suffer those who truly fear and love him to walk for a time in spiritual darkness, as if deserted by him. Yet even in such dread emergency, they are said to be supported by the operation of the Spirit from utter despair. And since love of Christ and of the brethren, sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, never do entirely die out of the Christian breast, such assurance may in due time be revived—it is said—so that the believer, once more walking in the light, may rest with absolute security in his hope of ultimate salvation. Nor is this hope,—it is added,—a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, but a gracious certainty induced in the believing spirit by the Spirit of God,—a certainty founded partly on the divine promises, partly on the testimony of the Spirit to the soul, and partly on the inward evidence which the possession of spiritual graces and virtues supplies. This witness of the Spirit, direct and indirect—to use the distinction of Wesley—is however to be carefully defined, so as to distinguish it from dangerous superstition. Nor is the believer to expect *extraordinary revelation* in confirmation of his holy certitude—a statement evidently designed to meet the claim of Aquinas that nothing short of such revelation could justify our assurance of personal salvation. The believer must rather find that certitude in what he has by grace already become, and in the gracious pledges which God has made in his Word to every saint. Another practical caution is added here, in the suggestion that there may be an unwarranted and delusive assurance, a counterfeit

of the true, such as appears in the false hopes and carnal presumptions of *hypocrites and other unregenerate men*—whose hope, it is said, *shall utterly perish*.

Early Arminianism denounced the doctrine of assurance as a pillow for the flesh, hurtful to good manners, godliness, prayer and other holy courses. But when duly guarded against misconstruction and abuse, the doctrine as here presented may be joyfully accepted as a final corollary from the antecedent teachings of the Symbols respecting saving faith and its fruitage in repentance, in good works, and in perseverance in the struggle after holiness. It is a happy song of confidence and expectation which not merely here and there a Paul or a Luther or a Knox may sing, but as well a holy strain that may be, ought to be, on the lip and in the heart of every true disciple. The Larger Catechism justly teaches (80) that *all such as truly believe* in Christ and are endeavoring to walk in all good conscience before him, may properly cherish this serene, unswerving confidence that their present state of grace will eventuate in a realized and completed salvation amid the felicities of heaven. An equally impressive statement of the truth appears in the subsequent declaration (83) that the members of the invisible Church—all true saints—have communicated to them in this life *the first fruits of glory with Christ*, as they are members of him as their head, and so are interested in that glory which he is possessed of: and *as an earnest thereof*, enjoy the sense of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and the hope of glory. In the same glowing strain, the Sum of Saving Knowledge, in setting forth the several warrants and motives for believing in Christ, quaintly says: Whosoever believeth the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and findeth himself powerfully drawn to believe in him by the sight of life in him . . . may be sure of right and interest to life eternal through him.

12. Perfection in the Christian Life: Final Review.

As we close at this point the study of the Christian Life as presented in this series of chapters in the Confession, with the confirmatory teaching in the Catechisms, we should note the fact that, so far as any formal statement goes, one important question remains unanswered,—the question whether this Christian life does actually reach what may be called perfection, or entire completion, in the present world. The Roman dogma of perfection as consisting simply in conformity in faith and conduct to the teachings and impositions of the

church, had indeed been formally, indignantly, repudiated by the Reformers, as little better than a travesty on what the Bible requires in order to true spiritual completeness. The mystical speculations and practical pretensions of the primitive Anabaptists, and other aberrations of the same class, had also been rejected as without biblical warrant, and as involving—as the subsequent history of such aberrations clearly shows—very wide and even fatal departure from the biblical idea of entire holiness in heart and life. Neither the perfectionism of George Fox in England, nor that of Spener and the Moravian Brethren in Germany, had as yet made its appearance. The doctrine of Wesley (Sermons on Christian Perfection) that a certain type of perfection, not angelic or Adamic or in any sense absolute in itself, but consisting in evangelical obedience and abstinence from sinning, in perfect love toward God in Christ, and in entire consecration to his service, may be and ought to be attained by every believer,—this doctrine, especially in the various forms which it has assumed in more recent times, had scarcely an existence as a dogma prior to the eighteenth century. Hence we find no distinctly formulated propositions on this subject in the earlier creeds.

In the Westminster formularies, however, we may gather up various indications that the doctrine of a sanctification completed in the present life, even in the guarded form of it afterward presented by Wesley, was not regarded by the Assembly as sound. Thus it is directly said in the Confession (XIII : ii) that while sanctification is throughout in the whole man, it *is yet imperfect in this life*,—some remnants of corruption abiding still in every part of his nature, with the inevitable consequence in *continual and irreconcilable struggle* between the spirit and the flesh. It is also said (XVI : v) that though our good works are good because they proceed from the Spirit moving within us, yet so far as they are ours, they are always *defiled and mixed with many weaknesses and imperfections*. And while growth in grace is enjoined as a duty upon every regenerate soul, and resistance to all sin even in its most subtle and secret forms is required of every one as a sign of discipleship, yet we are warned (L. C. 77) that this process of sanctification *is not in this life perfect* in any saint, but groweth continually up to or toward perfection. And in the Shorter Catechism (37) it is said that the souls of believers are *at their death*—not before—*made perfect in holiness*, and do immediately pass into glory. Other incidental illustrations might be quoted to show that the Westminster divines regarded the

construction of the Christian character as a process too great, too grand to be finished in such a life as this. Its foundations indeed, as they conceived, are laid here in saving faith and love, and strenuous struggle with remaining sin, and in such union with Christ as the Spirit institutes on earth, but the completion of it is a work which heaven alone can realize in full perfection. Dickson (Truth's Victory) illustrates the general belief of the age in his quaint distinction between a perfection of parts and a perfection of degrees: the former apparent when we have a part of any grace, and are renewed in some measure in any power or faculty of the whole man, though we be not come to the just and due measure in any of them: the latter consisting in the complete measure of our conformity, and our exact correspondence to the law of God in respect of all whatsoever it requires. Perfection of degrees he pronounces unattainable in this life: it is one of the graces of heaven.

In closing our survey of the Christian Life, as portrayed in the Symbols, we may well pause, first, to mark the illustration afforded in this impressive statement, of the profound spiritual experience and attainments of the men who drafted it. This group of chapters shows us not merely what the divines of Westminster believed, but what they had personally felt—what they had realized in their own souls as Christian men. They had themselves attained the saving faith; they had been humbled before God in the true repentance; they had themselves wrought the good works which are the signs and fruits of true faith; they had cherished the holy temper of perseverance, and had known in personal consciousness some large measure of the spiritual assurance, which they here describe so well. In a word, they had experienced personally what they set forth in these chapters; and their religion, their godly living and activities, were simply the efflorescence of their clear, strong, spiritual creed as here defined. Nor may we doubt that it was not so much their aspiration after theologic completeness, as their ardent desire to help those who might accept their formularies into higher religious experience and a nobler type of life, that led them to sketch with so much care this striking portraiture of the Christianized man,—a delineation which might almost be regarded as their greatest confessional work.

In this connection we may wisely note also, the essential harmony of their teaching with all the most thoughtful, most thorough and spiritual beliefs cherished in this department of doctrine by antecedent Protestantism. One of the grandest facts in the

history of the Reformation is the fact that, while the Reformers could not always agree in their statements of the Christian Truth, they were so cordially agreed in their view respecting what constitutes the Christian man, and in their harmonious endeavors to rise in actual living up to that lofty standard. Accepting Christ as their ideal, and love as their supreme motive, and the kingdom of God as their law, they became in a remarkable degree one in soul and one in life, notwithstanding all doctrinal variations. And in the formularies of Westminster we find an elaborate and beautiful reproduction of all that the antecedent Protestantism had either taught or experienced at this vital point. In their portraiture of the Christian life, the living, glowing, actual piety of the Reformation found its completest expression.

It should be observed further, that the developments, theological and practical, of the past two centuries have added nothing of importance to this remarkable portraiture. There have indeed been great changes in the views and in the experience and practice of Christians since that historic era. The Christianized man of the nineteenth century is another, and in some features a larger and grander product, than the Christian man of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. But the subsequent experience of evangelical Christendom, complex and involved and sometimes revolutionary as it has been, has not altered or done away with any essential element in the spiritual concept here brought before us. The Christian life is still as of old essentially a supernatural life, originating in the gracious election of God and the effectual call of his blessed Spirit. Faith, saving faith, is as indispensable a factor in that life as ever. No adequate substitute has been found for evangelical repentance, as the correlative to acceptable faith. The good works enjoined by Scripture are still required of every one who aspires to lead the Christian life. Perseverance in believing and trusting, and in godly walk and conversation, are as indispensable now as they were in the days of Luther and Calvin, or in the subsequent era of the Westminster divines. Whatever modifications have since come into religious experience, whatever changes have occurred in the outward forms of doctrine or the practical living of Christians, or in the attitude of sects or schools within the Protestant domain, these essential elements in spiritual Christianity still stand unchanged, unmodified, unimpaired,—as indeed they have stood ever since the days when our Lord taught and the New Testament was written.

It may be added finally, that whatever of modification the future shall reveal in the forms which piety may assume, or in

the duty or conduct of Christians in the world, no essential change, no radical variation, no real compromise as to these cardinal elements can ever occur. There will never come an age when the process of salvation will be essentially different from that which has been affirmed and experienced during these three Protestant centuries. Regeneration and conversion, pardon and acceptance with God through the mediation of the Messiah alone, sanctification through the Spirit, Christ reproduced within us as well as Christ acting and suffering vicariously in our behalf, will and must forever remain as the central verities of supernatural Christianity. And through all the future the true man in Christ Jesus will and must be a man effectually called and savingly wrought upon by the Holy Ghost,—a man whose inspiration is faith and whose law of living is love,—a man who is devoted to holiness and godliness as the chief end of his existence, and who through grace is enabled to persevere in such a type of life as these spiritual verities require, through all time and forever. Analytic theologians may still differ as to many details in Christian belief and experience, and denominations may still divide and conflict around questions of creed and ordinance and worship. But around these fundamental elements there never can be any essential diversity among those who follow Christ, and who in their hearts believe that the Christian life as taught and exemplified by him, and as imitated by his disciples through the ages, is the true and the only true and worthy life for man. To surrender these cardinal elements would be to abandon Christianity as a supernatural religion, and ultimately to plunge into the abysses of a gross naturalism which knows no God but Nature, accepts no rule of living higher than Self, and anticipates no worthy consummation for our race either here or hereafter.

LECTURE TENTH—THE LAW OF GOD.

MORAL LAW: MORAL GOVERNMENT: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: CHRIST AND LAW: MORALITY: LAW AND GRACE.

C. F. CH. XIX: L. C. 91–152: S. C. 39–84.

It has been strenuously urged against the Westminster Assembly that in formulating its Symbols it gave excessive prominence to the doctrine of the sovereignty in God, his supreme will and his dominating and eternal decree,—under the influence of this theologic tendency ignoring or minifying other important doctrines, such as the fatherhood in God, and his immeasurable tenderness and mercy toward man. A large part of this objection loses its significance, as soon as the grand correlated doctrine of Law, as presented in these formularies, is rightly apprehended. The will of God is seen at once to be not an arbitrary force, mysterious as it is resistless, but a power animated and controlled in every manifestation by holy law. The absolute decree is not some dark and awful purpose, having no recognizable basis, but a determination which is shaped in every part and movement by perfect law. The sovereignty in God is not an arbitrary rule in which infinite reason manifests no sway, but is rather a sovereignty exercised in and through sacred law—a law worthy of him who not only enacts it as a rule for his creatures, but himself illustrates and obeys it throughout his holy administration. Law thus, in the fine phrase of Hooker, hath her seat in the bosom of God, and her voice is but the expression of his august purpose and his majestic will. Nor can there be anything in his sublime scheme of grace and redemption which is at variance with this holy supremacy of law: the mercy that pities and the grace that saves, are as truly regulated by law as are the stars in their harmonious movement through the skies. What Hooker styles the harmony of the world, or of the material universe which is everywhere and evermore under law, is even more deep, more melodious, more winning in the moral universe, and most of all within the special sphere of salvation.

Hence we discover the significance of such a chapter (XIX) as that which we are about to examine with its simple title, *Of the Law of God*. Having set forth the Plan and the Process of

Salvation, and described the fruits of that gracious scheme as seen in the Christian Life, the Symbols proceed at once to an exposition of that divine Law, according to whose teaching the Christian life must ever be regulated. The logical connection and necessity are at once apparent. For, though the Christianized man is now animated and guided by the interior ministries of the Spirit, and is thus living in some sense within a higher sphere than that of law, in another sense he is more fully and truly than ever under obligation to obey every jot, every tittle, of the divine commandments. Christ came not to abolish, but to fulfill the law,—not to release his disciples from the duty of obedience, but to spiritualize and exalt the law, and make it more completely and also more graciously the supreme rule of their life. Though called, justified and sanctified inwardly, and though by faith and repentance and perseverance they were to be assured of their acceptance with God, they were still to live out their faith, to prove its reality and power, by lives sweetly submitted to law, just as Christ himself came under the law, and glorified it by his obedience.

1. Place of law in the Symbols: its prominence.

The place of law in the Westminster system is best apprehended by a study of the proportion and relation of the two elements, belief and duty, in the Catechisms. The question which at the outset confronts us in both is the fundamental question respecting the contents of Holy Scripture, and the answer in both is in the same terms: The Scriptures principally teach *what man is to believe* concerning God, and *what duty God requires of man*. And the duty which God requires of man, both agree in saying (91 and 39), is *obedience to his revealed will*—in other words, to his holy law. The proportion of the two elements is suggestive. While belief in the doctrines of grace, and the effects of such belief on character and life, are placed in the foreground, only thirty-five of the one hundred and seven answers in the Shorter Catechism relate to such belief, while sixty-nine, or about sixty per cent. of the whole, are concerned with duty,—chiefly as set forth (in forty-four answers) in the exposition of the Ten Commandments, and (in eighteen answers) in a commentary on the Lord's Prayer. This proportion shows that it was the primary aim of the compilers to produce in their Catechism a practical rather than a theological document; one in which duty should be the main element, yet duty conditioned upon and emphasized by the antecedent exposition of saving belief.

The Larger Catechism contains a somewhat greater doctrinal element,—a feature explained by the fact that, while the Shorter

was designed chiefly for the common people, this was drafted for the benefit rather of those called to office in the Church,—in the language of the Adopting Act of the Assembly of Scotland, a directory for catechising such as have made some proficiency in the knowledge of the grounds of religion. Yet while ninety of its one hundred and ninety-six answers, or nearly forty-six per cent. relate to belief and its fruits, one hundred and six, fifty-four per cent. of the whole, relate to the duties which God requires of man. And of this second group of answers, fifty-eight, or more than one-fourth of the whole number in the Catechism, and more than one-third in space, are occupied with the exposition of the Law of God, as found in the Ten Commandments, while twenty-eight others are devoted to the exposition of the Lord's Prayer. We shall have occasion to see in the further study of the Larger Catechism, that nowhere in confessional literature can there be found so minute, discriminating, comprehensive a commentary on the divine law, as the appointed rule of conduct for every man, and specially for all believers. Its enumeration of obligations imposed and of sins forbidden, including not only all overt action, but also all inward thought and feeling, is well-nigh overwhelming. So specific and detailed, so penetrating and inclusive, so solemn and subduing are its statements, that we spontaneously pronounce it a most remarkable code of ethics, even more readily than we revere it as an admirable statement of evangelical truth.

It might be expected that the element of doctrine would be made more prominent in the Confession, since two such practical symbols were planned for and prepared in conjunction with that formulary. It was not needful to say as much relatively about duty, while the nature and purpose of the document required that more should be incorporated in it about saving belief. Yet of the thirty-three chapters in the Confession, at least thirteen are directly concerned with duty in various aspects, and five more present doctrine primarily or chiefly in forms which involve the element of personal obligation. For faith and repentance and good works, and perseverance in them, are all obligations as well as privileges,—duties of the highest, most comprehensive and solemn character, as truly as they are gracious gifts flowing into the soul through the mediation of Christ. But when in the study of the Confession we reach this large and commanding chapter on the Law of God, we pass immediately into a sphere where duty is the sole, supreme feature. And in the twelve chapters that follow, constituting in space more than one-third of the

entire Symbol, we read of nothing but law and obligation toward God and man, toward self and society, toward the state and the church. The study of these chapters, in their connection with the introductory exposition of the divine law, will convince the student that the Confession itself is much more than a mere compilation of *credenda*,—that it is also, and even primarily, an admirable code of morals, wisely fitted in many aspects to guide and regulate the Christian life.

It is a singular fact that this feature of the Symbols should have been relatively so much retired from view; and that the element of belief, even of intellectual as distinguished from saving belief, should have come so generally to be regarded as their dominating element. What we know of the men of Westminster justifies rather the judgment that, great theologians as some of them were, and tenacious disputants respecting abstractions in doctrine, as they appear to have sometimes been, they were men who believed in law, and held themselves strenuously to the supreme obligation of loyalty to known duty at whatever cost. While they emphasized and exalted grace, they also exalted and emphasized the Ten Commandments. They lived, as we know, in an age when the chief problems to be solved were problems of duty—when ecclesiastical and civil battles were to be fought in defense of right or in stern opposition to wrong. What Macaulay has said of them, and their obedience to conscience and their unflinching fidelity not merely to abstract truth but still more to what they believed to be duty, is both true and just. As we shall have occasion hereafter to see, Cromwell and his Ironsides were not braver, firmer, more loyal to obligation than they, even when such loyalty cost them place and support and life itself.

Yet it has happened in later times that the Symbols which they labored so long and earnestly to frame, have come to be viewed largely as a series of merely abstract propositions, over which technical theologians may wrangle, and at which thoughtless minds may point the finger of scorn or of ridicule. It may indeed be that formularies so extensive and complex, dealing with so many profound problems in philosophy as well as religion, do furnish opportunity for such misapprehension of their main design, or even for inappreciative criticism or contumely. Perhaps the immediate successors of the divines of Westminster found a certain degree of relief, amid the troublous times that followed in Britain during the latter half of that century, in theorizing and disputing about doctrine rather than battling in behalf of duty. In the century that followed, such misconception of the Symbols became,

as appears in the sad history of British Moderatism, far too general. So in our own century they have been viewed too often as a complicated series of dogmatic statements, theological rather than practical, whose acceptance is hardly essential to our being Christians, or even contributory to our well-being as Christians. In this view multitudes who never comprehended or even read them, point at them in derision or treat them with indifference, as being merely the creation of divines given overmuch to abstract speculation, or as the dead and dried shell of old dogmas which have little or no relation to current life. How far such opinions are from a correct and appreciative estimate of the Symbols, regarded especially as a compendium of duty, will become apparent in our further studies.

A cursory survey of the place which the Law of God held in Protestant symbolism generally, may be of service at this point.

2. Doctrine of Law in Protestant symbolism.

It is a familiar fact that the Catholicism of the period of the Reformation charged Protestantism generally with indifference to the Ten Commandments, and even with affirming that obedience to these divine requisitions was inimical to salvation. The Council of Trent in its Decree on Justification formally condemned, as if it were a Protestant doctrine, the opinion that the observance of these commandments is unnecessary or is impossible to one who is justified through grace; and by contrast taught that God by commanding them, both admonishes us to do what we are able, and to pray for help where we are not able, and gives us grace that we may be able to do whatever he commands. In three Canons (XVIII–XX) appended to this Decree, the Council pronounced the anathema of the church on all who should say that such obedience is impossible, or that the ten commandments do not appertain to Christians, or that nothing but faith is required by the Gospel, as if the Gospel were a bare and absolute promise of eternal life without reference to the condition of obeying the law of God. And Romanism from that day to the age of Bellarmine and our own, has charged Protestants with holding the errors which are here condemned, as if these were necessary corollaries from its fundamental doctrine of justification through Jesus Christ and his grace alone.

It is not to be denied that some of the Protestant leaders, even Luther himself, became at times amenable to such a charge,—at least to the extent of retiring relatively from their teaching this element of moral law. Some special exposure to this liability grew out of their earnest protestations against the Roman perversion

of the doctrine of law, and its false view of good works, with all the practical corruptions which that view involved. So strenuous were they in their resistance to the ceremonialism which as a cerement had wrapped itself around the Roman church, and so opposed to that ecclesiasticism which perverted even the Ten Commandments into so many props to sustain the priestly power and to oppress true spiritual life, that they sometimes,—it must be confessed—overlooked that obligation of loyal and loving obedience to law, which is as much a part of true religion as justifying faith itself. It may also be that in declaring the deliverance of Christians from the requisitions of the ceremonial law, they failed sometimes to distinguish sufficiently between the ceremonial and the moral law, and to recognize the fact that the moral law is by its own nature incapable of abrogation, and must stand in unimpaired force under the Gospel as before. Yet this was only an occasional mistake. The Reformers generally, both Lutheran and Calvinistic, held firmly in the main to the sacredness of the divine law, and unswervingly affirmed the obligation of all believers to obey it in both letter and spirit. One exception will hereafter be considered at length,—the fourth commandment, which both Luther and Calvin were inclined to regard as an ordinance for the Hebrews during the legal dispensation—a ceremonial regulation simply, rather than an obligation laid upon the universal Church through all lands and ages. In their revolt against the reproduction of Judaism, with its priestly orders and Old Testament ritual, within the church of Rome, and in their ardent advocacy of Christian liberty, they doubtless at this point, and perhaps at some others, fell short of that entire, unconditional loyalty to the divine law in every part of it, which is unquestionably enjoined in Scripture, and which has been very generally acknowledged by evangelical minds in later times.

But of their general faithfulness to the doctrine of law as well as the correlated doctrine of grace, we happily have abundant proof in the series of Protestant creeds. The Small Catechism of Luther commences with an exposition of each of the commandments, declaring that God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments, and promises every blessing to all who gladly keep them. In respect even to the fourth commandment, this Catechism says by way of exposition that it requires us not to despise preaching and the Word of God, but to deem that Word holy, and willingly to hear and learn it. The Augsburg Confession (Art. VI) declares that men ought to do the good works commanded of God, because it is his will, though not in

the expectation that they shall merit justification before him on account of such obedience. The Formula of Concord (IV) repels in terms the papal charge that Protestants held that good works were not needful and might even be detrimental to salvation; and in two subsequent Articles (V–VI) discusses fully the true doctrine, setting forth the nature of the law as a statement of what is just and acceptable to God, and of whatever is sinful and opposite to his holy will, and pointing out the real uses of the law in its relation to the scheme of grace revealed in the Gospel. There are, it is said, three distinct uses of the law;—to maintain moral discipline so that wild and intractable men might be restrained by appointed barriers,—to bring such men also to an acknowledgment of their sin and guilt before God,—and thirdly, that regenerate men might have some certain rule whereby they may and ought to shape their lives. Under the latter head it is added that true believers, though they regard themselves as freed through Christ from the constraint and curse of the law, are still to meditate on it day and night, and continually to exercise themselves in the keeping thereof. On this ground, it was enjoined upon all ministers to preach the law, not merely to the impenitent but also and equally to those who had been regenerated and by faith justified,—the law, it is said, being one and the same to all, namely, the unchangeable will of God; and the fruits of obedience thereto being substantially those fruits of the Spirit which the Gospel requires from all who profess to believe in Christ.

This is in substance the doctrine of the subsequent creeds. The Second Helvetic Confession (Cap. XII), the French Confession (XXIII) and the Belgic (XXIV–XXV) contain similar teachings: and in the Heidelberg Catechism, as in the Small Catechism of Luther, we find a detailed exposition of the duties enjoined in the Ten Commandments, and an acknowledment of the obligation of all to live, not according to some but according to all these divine statutes. The Scotch Confession, with its customary earnestness, declares (XIV) that God has given to man his holy Law, in which not only are forbidden all such works as displease and offend his holy majesty, but also are commended all such as please him, and as he has promised to reward: and (XV) that this Law is most just, most equal, most holy and most perfect, commanding those things which, if they were wrought in perfection, are able to give life, and to bring man to eternal felicity. The Thirty-Nine Articles (VII) affirm that, though the ceremonial law has been abolished under the Gospel, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments

which are moral: and the Anglican Catechism, like that of Heidelberg, introduces the Ten Commandments as the basis of its instruction of children in respect to personal duty. To the Irish Articles, with their strong meat as to the covenant of works and the obligation binding man to entire and perfect obedience, and as to the relation of law and grace in justification under the Gospel, it is not needful to refer in detail. Current Protestant opinion is indicated in the Articles of the English Synod which state the doctrine of Christian obedience in the following terms: We believe and acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ has laid his people by his grace under new obligation to keep the perfect law of God, and has by precept and example enlarged our knowledge of that law, and illustrated the spirit of filial love in which the divine will is to be obeyed.

What is thus apparent in the creeds of Protestantism is no less visible in the theologies of the sixteenth and especially of the seventeenth century. Calvin, while he emphasizes the differences between the law and the gospel, as found in the Old and the New Testaments respectively, yet introduces into the Institutes a long and elaborate exposition of the Ten Commandments, and quotes the remark of Augustine that obedience to God in these is sometimes the parent and guardian and sometimes the origin and source of all virtue. Luther, as his Larger Catechism shows us, was no less earnest than Calvin in maintaining the just and holy supremacy of the moral law. Later divines, Lutheran and Reformed, were essentially agreed at this point. And what was true as to the theologies of Protestantism, was no less true in the personal convictions and practical living of Protestants generally. While they received the gospel as the only foundation of their hope of salvation, they also bowed in cordial submission to the law as the practical test or index of the sincerity and value of such hope. And it is matter of history that no small measure of the influence attained by Protestantism over the practical life of northern Europe was due to such unswerving fidelity to the moral law.

3. Law of God defined: Moral Law in Nature, in Scripture.

Without adverting further to that important distinction between providential and moral law, between providential and moral government, which since the era of Butler and Edwards, has been so prominent an element especially in Calvinistic theology, we may here consider specifically the meaning of the terse title given to this chapter, *the Law of God*. Moral law may be defined generically as the

expression of the will of God as our Creator and Sovereign and Father, through specific statutes and with appropriate authority over mankind as his creatures and subjects and children. This law, in the strong phrase of Calvin, is the true and eternal rule of righteousness, prescribed to men of all ages and nations who wish to conform their lives to the will of God. He quotes Cicero as borrowing from Plato the striking statement that human laws are the souls of states, and himself describes them as the strong nerves of civil polity. But this divine law, in the wide sweep of its dominion and in the majesty of its sway, rises as far above all human laws as the heavens are higher than the earth. It is indeed the strong nerve of the divine government—the soul and life of that righteous and holy polity which God is administering over mankind. This moral law exists in a variety of forms, and with less or more of comprehensiveness and cogency. It is sometimes described in the Symbols as a law of nature—a moral rule, so visibly stamped on the very constitution of material things that the eye of man may readily read its requisitions, and in some degree appreciate its mandatory claim. In this sense it is represented (Ch. I : i) as the light of nature, flashing out in the works of creation and providence in such ways as to make manifest to men their duty, and to render inexcusable their neglect. Bishop Butler teaches (Analogy, Part I : Ch. III), that there is a kind of moral government (including law) implied in the natural government of God :—that the notion of such a government (and law) is not fictitious but natural, and is suggested to our thought by the constitution and course of nature.

Moral law is sometimes set forth as a law written on the heart of man himself, at the very instant of creation, and by an inward spiritual compulsion inciting him to free and loving obedience. It is sometimes (VII : i–ii) represented as a covenant or compact in which God lays specific enactments upon man, and requires perfect and personal obedience, with implied promises and threatenings appended. In the chapter now under consideration it is described not merely as a covenant imposed upon Adam, but as a universal rule of righteousness, adjusted to the moral nature and condition of mankind even as fallen; and this rule of righteousness is said to have been in substance *delivered by God upon Mount Sinai in ten commandments.* Thenceforward in the Old Testament it is gradually broadened and spiritualized, and is described by various terms, such as word, testimony, statute, ordinance, judgment. In the New Testament, under the hand of Christ, it receives its complete and final form, as a rule of love as well as

righteousness—a rule including all men alike, and requiring obedience not in overt action only, but in disposition, heart, purpose, inmost thought and impulse. Yet we are not contemplating many laws, but only one and the same law, varying indeed according to the capabilities and moral conditions of those to whom it is applied, but remaining as God sees it always the one perpetual rule of life for man. Dickson (Truth's Victory over Error) affirms the identity of all divine law and its universal claim, in the statement that all the precepts of the moral law belong to the law of nature, naturally engraven upon the hearts of men, which cannot be abrogated, but obliges all men perpetually and unceasingly from natural reason itself.

We are not concerned in the present discussion with the law written on the heart of man at his creation, and which undoubtedly included in its broad sweep every moral act possible to him, nor with that specific commandment referred to in the doctrine of the covenant of works, and which was transgressed in the temptation and the fall. Neither in fact are we concerned with the law of nature generically—that primal book of the law, which is written on the stars, stamped on the constitution of the earth, and exhibited to man in all the myriad forms of order and rule apparent in physical nature. Nor have we occasion here to consider specially the ceremonial law mentioned in the chapter, with its typical ordinances,—partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings and benefits; and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties, *all which ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament.* The Confession also recognizes what is termed judicial law,—enactments imposed upon the Hebrew nation as a body politic, but *expiring together with the state of that people*, and therefore not obligatory upon other states or nations, any further than the *general equity thereof may require.* Our present concern is with that universal moral law of which the chapter declares that it *doth ever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof:* and of which it is also said, that as a rule of life it claims such obedience not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it—an obligation which, it is added, *Christ in the Gospel doth not any way dissolve but much strengthen.* In the Larger Catechism (93) there is a remarkable definition of this moral law which is both more specific and more comprehensive than that in the Confession: The declaration of the will of God to mankind, directing and binding every one to personal, perfect and perpetual conformity

and obedience thereunto, in the frame and disposition of the whole man, soul and body, and in performance of all those duties of holiness and righteousness which he oweth to God and man,—promising life upon the fulfilling and threatening death upon the breach of it: Minutes, 400–1. No such definition as this—one so clear and concise, so broad and impressive,—can be found anywhere else in Christian symbolism.

Before proceeding to the examination of this Law of God in detail, specially as contained in the Ten Commandments, we shall do well to consider the suggestive teaching of the Symbols, particularly the Larger Catechism, respecting the uses of this law, and the rules which must be observed for the right understanding of it. The Formula of Concord, as we have already seen, enumerated three uses which the law subserves in its application not to a holy, but to a sinful race,—to restrain men from sin, to convince and convict of sin committed, and to guide the regenerate in duty and a holy life. The French Confession declares (Art. XXIII) that we must seek aid from the law and the prophets for the ruling of our lives, as well as for our confirmation in the promises of the Gospel: and the Belgic Confession (XXV) inculcates the same obligation in kindred terms. The Second Helvetic Confession, while declaring that Christians are not sub lege but sub gratia, yet teaches that in the law we have the revealed formulas of both vice and virtue, and therefore it is not to be fastidiously rejected,—that as set forth in the gospel it also brings us to Christ, and is to be regarded as obligatory through his endorsement,—and consequently that all are to be condemned who set aside the law as no longer of service to Christians. The chapter we are considering, taken in conjunction with the teaching of the Larger Catechism (94-97) presents the subject in greater detail than any previous creed. The analysis is evidently based on the Institutes of Calvin (B. II: Ch. 8), in which the various offices of the law, especially as it is applied to the unregenerate, are very forcibly presented. It is said, first, that the law, though no man can attain to righteousness and life by it, is still of *great use to all men alike*: and this general or universal use is said to be to *inform them of the nature and will of God*, and of their obligation toward him; to convince them also of *the pollution of their nature, hearts and lives*, as revealed by the law, and of their disability to obey as they ought; consequently to make them humble, and incline them *to see their need of Christ* as their deliverer from sin and misery. To the unregenerate as a class,

4. Uses of the Moral Law: rules of interpretation.

the law is said, secondly, to be of direct use in awakening their consciences, and inciting them to flee from the wrath to come, or as an alternative *to leave them inexcusable*, while under the condemnation which the law pronounces. To the regenerate as a class, the law is said, thirdly, to be of special use *to restrain them from the corruptions* to which they still are exposed, and by its promises to encourage them in duty and thankfulness by revealing *what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof*. And these various uses, specially to the regenerate, are further said not to be contrary to the grace of the gospel, but to *sweetly comply with it*,—there being no antagonism between the law and the gospel at this point, but both when rightly used working harmoniously together in the interest of salvation. The subject of the uses of the law seems to have engrossed largely the interest of the Assembly in respect both to the unregenerate and to believers; the debate referring, however, more to shades of thought and of expression than to the essential doctrine: Minutes, pp. 272-4; 400-2.

The concluding section of the chapter contains a truth which has been too often overlooked, in the statement that the Holy Spirit *enables the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully which the will of God, revealed in the law, requireth to be done*. No doctrine of law can be either sound or valuable which does not include this correlated and consummating truth. To the sinner who is conscious of the pollution and the disability here implied, and at the same time is convicted in conscience in view of his spiritual condition, it is a matter of unspeakable moment to discover such a divine agency as is here described,—one that is able to cleanse the pollution and help the disability, and to empower him to do and to do freely and cheerfully what God requires. So to the Christian who is in like manner oppressed with the sense of infirmity and of failure, and who realizes how inadequate his best obedience is, the presence of such an agency brings life and strength and assurance, so that he now runs cheerfully and freely and joyously in the way of the divine commandments. It was proposed in the Assembly, in the interest of the high doctrine respecting the sovereignty of the Spirit, that the words, *and is subordinate to it*, should be added, but objection being made, the proposition was happily withdrawn, leaving the statement as it now appears. Such a doctrine of the Holy Spirit as an energizing and guiding power within the soul, is indispensable to any right conception of the uses of the law in conjunction with the scheme of grace. It is hardly needful to add that the bestowment of the

Spirit upon the sinner in order that he may be enabled to surrender himself heartily to the claim of law, and upon the believer that he may render such obedience as the law demands, is not something separate and apart from the penitential embracing of Christ as a Savior, or from loyal devotion to him and his cause. The Spirit in all this complex process works in the interest, not of a righteousness and a salvation to be secured through perfect obedience to the law, but rather in the interest of the Gospel as a scheme of free and unmerited grace.

In respect to the rules to be observed in the understanding and application of the law, several precepts are laid down in the Larger Catechism (99), which are worthy of most careful study. They were doubtless drawn in large degree from the regulative instructions suggested by commentators on preceding creeds: see especially Ursinus on the Heidelberg Catechism. An interesting debate on these rules is reported in the Minutes of the Assembly: 396–8. As given in the Catechism, they should be considered in conjunction with those more comprehensive rules which are laid down in the opening chapter of the Confession for our guidance in the interpretation and use of the Scriptures generally. In condensed form these precepts are as follows: First, the law is to be regarded as perfect in itself, and as demanding full conformity and entire or perfect obedience from all men,—no sin to be allowed in the least measure, and every duty done in the utmost degree possible. Second: the law is not to be regarded as relating only to words and works and outward acts, but as reaching the understanding, the affections and the will, and demanding supreme control over all the powers and activities of the soul. Third: the several commandments are not mutually exclusive, but are rather so interwoven that one and the same duty is often presented in a variety of forms or relations. Fourth: a prohibition always implies the antithetic command, and a positive command implies the antithetic prohibition, and threatenings and promises in the law also stand over against each other in a similar way. Fifth: while what is forbidden once is forbidden always, and what is enjoined once is enjoined always, every particular duty is not to be done at all times or in all circumstances. Sixth: the prohibition of one specific sin or the enjoining of one specific duty must be interpreted as inclusive of all sins or all duties of the same class, together with all the causes or occasions associated with them. Two other practical rules are appended to these; that we ought to induce others to do or to avoid whatever we are ourselves commanded or forbidden to do, so far as others occupy the same place and

condition with ourselves; and that we are also bound to help others in doing what is commanded to them, and in like manner to refrain from partaking with them in doing whatever they are forbidden to do in any commandment.

That these precepts are just and valuable in the interpretation of the moral law, in whatever form of it, is quite manifest: it is also obvious that they are sufficient for our guidance in such interpretation. Thoroughly applied, they bring us face to face with that law as an inclusive and searching rule of life, profoundly spiritual in its reach, intensely practical in all that it either enjoins or prohibits; infinitely just alike in command and prohibition, and divinely gracious in intention, inasmuch as absolute obedience to it would be both the supreme glory and highest blessedness of man. The sweep of this law thus interpreted is as wide as humanity, and so specific as to comprehend within its sway the most secret act, the inmost thought and impulse of every human being. Its position is as settled and unchangeable as the stars are in their courses, and its supremacy is none other than the supremacy of God.

5. The Ten Commandments: general view: the two Tables.

Holding in mind this generic conception of the moral law, we may now proceed to consider the specific form of it given in the Ten Commandments. It has already been said that man by nature was under moral government from the very instant of his creation, *having the law of God written in his heart, and power to fulfill it.* This was true of him, even before the special prohibition which resulted in his temptation and his fall from the primal state of obedience. In like manner law existed and claimed its legitimate jurisdiction over man during the long centuries between the creation and the flood, and during the entire patriarchal period extending to the exodus from Egypt. The crime of Cain, the corruption of all flesh upon the earth, the impiety of Babel, were each and all transgressions of this one divine law. The life of the patriarchs was a life of obligation throughout, in forms adjusted to their several grades of moral development. Traces of specific law, such as the institution of the Sabbath and of sacrifices, appear at various points in the Hebraic history prior to the formal enactment at Sinai. What we have therefore in the Decem Verba is not a new law, but rather a new promulgation in more comprehensive and commanding form of legal requisitions which were written in the heart of humanity from the beginning, but which now needed more fresh and vivid

statement. Warburton (Divine Legation of Moses) has established this view by unquestionable argumentation. We have in the Decalogue, as he has shown, a consummation of all the obligations, whether toward God or toward man, which in all preceding eras had been laid on the conscience of the race. At the same time that marvelous code was an embodiment under direct divine dictation of those fundamental principles of righteousness, those broad legal obligations, which the race is bound to observe in all lands and ages to the end of the world. The Decalogue, in other words, is an incorporation of what from the day of creation and from the exodus was, and has continued ever since and will continue while the world stands, to be for our humanity the one perfect and supreme Law of God. This was, in the language of the Catechism (92) *the rule of obedience revealed to Adam* in the estate of innocence, and *to all mankind in him*, however far they may have forsworn allegiance to its claims.

We find in the Symbols only a general account of the enactment of this ecumenical code, as having been *delivered by the voice of God upon Mount Sinai, and written by him on the two tables of stone*. But it will be noted that this brief statement openly claims for the Decalogue a supernatural, a divine origin, and therefore demands for it universal recognition on the authority not of Moses but of God himself. In contrast with this affirmation we are confronted by the hypothesis of a purely Mosaic authorship, on the basis of antecedent Egyptian and other legislation. But one who studies this code in itself, who properly estimates its legal exactness and comprehensiveness and its lofty ethical quality, and who perceives how vitally it has affected legislation in all succeeding times and among many nations, and how it is still the germ of the best systems of law established in the most civilized lands, must set this hypothesis aside as wholly inadequate. However learned Moses may have been in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, there is as yet no clear evidence from either the biblical accounts or the archeological discoveries of recent date, that the code he brought to the fleeing children of Israel in the deserts of Arabia was his own construction simply, fashioned on the basis of what he had learned in Egypt. Nor can one who properly appreciates the character and career of this remarkable man, at once the legislator and leader, the patriarch and prophet and father of his people, rest in the conclusion that the transaction at Sinai was throughout a shrewd and wicked fraud. As the hypothesis that Christ was a man only is abundantly refuted by what he was and what he did, as described by the Evangelists, so the hypothesis

that the Decalogue was merely a fabrication by Moses, deceitfully imposed upon the Hebrews as a divine code, fails utterly to maintain itself in the presence either of the sacred record or of the subsequent history of the man or the nation.

Nor is it strange that at such a juncture in the career not of the Israelites only, but of the race as involved with them in the development of the plan of salvation a great miracle should have been wrought, and the voice of God heard, with accompanying lightnings and thunders and trumpet sounds, and the two tables of stone inscribed and delivered by the divine hand, to the awe-stricken descendants of Abraham just emerging from their estate of tribal slavery into national independence. That God could have wrought such a gigantic miracle, if he saw fit, is of course unquestionable: that the exigency which had come upon the Israelites, and on mankind as a fallen race in need of such a new enactment and enforcement of moral law, justified such miracle, seems very clear to those who apprehend in any adequate degree the divine plan of grace for the Jews, and through them for humanity. Every step in the unfolding of this gracious plan has been conditioned upon miracle as the only effectual attestation; and in this instance not only a confirmatory miracle, but just such a miracle as this, so awful in its magnitude and grandeur, so potent in its impressiveness, was even to human view indispensable. Augustine has well said (Civ. Dei. X: 13) that it was fit that the law which was given not to one man or a few enlightened men, but to the whole of a populous nation, should be accompanied by awe-inspiring signs—great marvels wrought by the ministry of angels. Yet he adds the suggestive remark, as if to guard against anthropomorphism, that as the sound which communicates the thought conceived in the silence of the mind is not the thought itself, so the form by which God, invisible in his own nature, became visible in this instance was not God himself. Nor has it ever been shown, though the objection has often been made, that the record in the book of the Exodus, as authentically written by Moses himself, is historically untrue: the writers of subsequent Scripture rather assume and demonstrate its historic reliability, notwithstanding all that recent criticism and unbelief have urged against it. Though it could be proved that some portions of the five books which bear the name of Moses, were written by other hands and at later dates, no evidence has thus far appeared to discredit our faith that the story of the Exodus, with all its remarkable and its supernatural incidents, was written by the hand of the man who himself led the Israelites forth from the

house of bondage, and consolidated them into one strong nationality.

Continuing our general inspection of the Decalogue, we may at this point briefly note certain introductory facts which should be carefully borne in mind in the proposed study. First: though given to the Hebrews as a body, and for the purpose of uniting them more closely in their political and social life, the commandments are each and all personal in form,—addressed directly to the individual conscience, and evidently intended to develop in each and all the sense of individual responsibility. Second: while these commandments are in form negative, pointing out to each person addressed what he must not do, they are also positive in their scope, enjoining in each instance those personal duties which stand over against the sins prohibited. Third: while the negative and positive prescripts of the law relate primarily to outward action, they also include by implication the inward purpose and spirit, and demand from every subject not merely an external morality, but also an inherent righteousness—an appropriate state and disposition of the soul in view of these requirements. Fourth: the motives brought to bear in order to prevent indulgence in sin, and to encourage fidelity to duty, are chiefly drawn in the first instance from the present rather than the future life; promise and warning relating alike to the present world primarily. Two reasons may be given for this fact;—that the degree of development in the persons first addressed rendered them mainly susceptible to this type of appeal; and further, that to the Hebrews as a corporate nation none but motives drawn from the present life could apply.

Fifth: the end in view and the proper tendency of the whole law was, as Calvin has well said, a perfection of righteousness—the forming of the entire life of the individual, and of the nation also, after the example of the divine purity. In other words, its primary purpose was not to convict and condemn, but to educate, to direct, to sanctify. Sixth: while the law was thus adjusted to the moral condition of the individual Hebrew, and to the needs of the Hebrews as a nation, its precepts are adapted to the necessity of mankind universally, and its right to control is as wide as humanity under all dispensations alike, and through all time. The theory that the Jehovah who issued these commands, was merely the God of the Hebrews as distinct from other nationalities,—that in this transaction he was acting provincially rather than as the God of all mankind, is sufficiently confuted by the obvious applicability and authoritativeness of the Decalogue as a

code of laws designed for the whole world. The race can never outgrow this code, or revolt successfully against its holy supervision. As Dean Stanley has said, in terms which are true of all Christian nations as of the English people: Its precepts are embedded in the heart of the Christian religion: Side by side with the Prayer of our Lord they appear, inscribed on our sanctuaries, read from our altars, and taught to our children as the foundation of all morality. As Luther well declared in the preface to his Larger Catechism, whosoever has thoroughly examined and studied the Ten Commandments, understands the whole Scripture, and is able on trying occasions and emergencies, to excel in wisdom, counsel and consolation.

Two other points should be briefly mentioned,—the differences between the records in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and the division into the two tables. These differences are in large degree verbal only, and are easily explicable, especially if the record in Exodus be regarded as primary, and that in Deuteronomy as a somewhat later rescript. It would involve no questioning of the proper authoritativeness of the records, or even of the Mosaic authorship, if with Ewald and others we should regard such verbal changes as additions made in the form of comment by other hands. The chief of these differences appears in the reason given for the observance of the law of the Sabbath,—that reason in Exodus being the fact of the divine cessation from the creative work on that day, and in Deuteronomy being the providential deliverance of the chosen people from Egyptian bondage. But these two reasons are not contradictory or mutually exclusive: the first is generic while the second is specific, and both may be as they doubtless were designed to be, conjoined in the incentive they offer for obedience to the command. In fact, the special reason given in Deuteronomy is only a repetition in substance of the sentence with which the Decalogue is introduced alike in both records, and which to the Hebrew was a strong incentive to obedience to each and all of the commandments. Under the Gospel, as we know, a third reason for such observance is found in the mediation of the risen Lord; not only creation and providence, but also salvation through him, being all united in enforcing the injunction to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.

The Symbols follow the current Reformed distribution of the Law into the two tables: *the first four commandments containing our duty to God, and the other six our duty to man.* Luther in his Smaller Catechism, following the general usage of the Western Church before the Reformation, which is still the usage of the

Roman communion, blends the second and third commands into one, and sub-divides the tenth, making the first table to consist of three only, and the second of seven commandments. The Catechism of Heidelberg adopts the distribution approved by Calvin and the Westminster divines, and by the Reformed churches generally; and this is doubtless the preferable arrangement. There are some good reasons, however, for associating the fifth commandment closely with those in the first table, since parents are the authors of our being, and are endowed de facto with an intrinsic right to govern us, and in this way are in some true sense the representatives of God and his authority and claims; and since also the honoring of parents is a lower yet correlated form of that piety, which has its highest form in the honoring of God supremely as the Father as well as Sovereign over all. At least, the fifth commandment may properly be regarded as a transitional precept, in and through which we pass easily from the duties we owe directly to God, to those which we sustain in various ways toward our fellow men. The tenth and last command may in a similar way be viewed as transitional also, since the mind is carried over in it from the contemplation of overt acts to the consideration of those moral feelings and motives which should underlie all our obedience. It is in fact the direct point of connection between the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount, wherein our Lord carries our thought altogether beyond the sphere of outward action, into that inward sphere of moral purpose and sentiment wherein character truly lies. What he came to fulfill in the spirit, had already been begun in the letter: *Thou shalt not covet!*

6. The First Table: Duties toward God: The sins forbidden: the obligations imposed.

Our Lord groups the duties enjoined in the first table of the law under the comprehensive concept of love to God, as constituting the first and great commandment,—a sacred requisition far above even that second commandment which is like unto it in spirit, love to our fellow men. Just as in the prayer which he himself has taught the world to offer, the name and will and kingdom of God are placed before all desires which center in ourselves or others, so here God and his claims are made primal and supreme: duty toward him, in contrast with the ordinary inclination and habit of men, or the prescripts of secular philosophy, is the first and chief concern. Nor is this order of obligation to be interpreted as indicating any narrow or selfish

desire for supremacy on the part of the divine lawgiver; it is in harmony rather with the eternal fitness of things, that God should be here as everywhere first, and his claim to love and loyalty supreme. That claim is directly emphasized in the preliminary sentence, introducing the first commandment,—a sentence in which God first declares himself as eminently Lord and King over the Hebrews in virtue of his own nature and election, and then points to his deliverance of the chosen people from their house of bondage as constituting a further ground of obligation on their part to honor and obey him. Yet this claim is not limited in its range to the Israelites, since God is as truly the constituted Lord by nature over all men, and by his providential and preserving care over all has laid them universally under the same primal obligation. Calvin in commenting on this sentence has well said that every man ought to welcome the Lawgiver, to observe whose commands he is particularly called; from whose benignity he expects an abundance of temporal blessings and a life of immortality and glory; by whose wonderful power and mercy he knows himself to be delivered from the jaws of death. The Larger Catechism (101) has well explained the sentence in its broadest range, in the declaration that therein God *manifesteth his sovereignty* as being Jehovah, the eternal and immutable and almighty God, having his being in and of himself, and giving being to all his words and works; that he is also a God in covenant, as with Israel of old *so with all his people* everywhere; who, as he brought them out of their bondage in Egypt, *so he delivered us from our spiritual thralldom;* and therefore *we are bound to take him for our God alone* and to keep all his commandments.

In the first commandment, flowing directly out of this introductory declaration, we find a solemn and authoritative prohibition of what in various forms is the primal sin of our corrupted race against God,—the sin of atheism, which positively or negatively denies his existence,—the sin of agnosticism, which holds that the fact of his existence and his relationship to man is incapable of proof, and therefore can neither be affirmed nor rejected,—the sin of polytheism, which permits belief in many gods besides Jehovah, all entitled to worship and service,—the sin of preferring and adoring some other deity before him, the true and only God. In the Shorter Catechism (47) these sins in their boundless variety are summed up in the statement that the commandment *forbiddeth the denying or not worshiping and glorifying the true God as God and our God, and the giving of that worship*

and glory to any other which is due to him alone. In the Larger Catechism (105) these sins are elaborately specialized into nearly a hundred particulars, wherein men may offend against the divine law at this point. A suggestive record of the manner in which these multiplied specifications for the first four commandments were furnished, appears in the Minutes of the Assembly, 403–12, seq. It is also there said (406) that after debate it was resolved to begin with the affirmative duties enjoined in all the commandments, though the commandments themselves in all instances but two begin with the naming of the sins forbidden. Positively, we are required, according to the Shorter Catechism (46), to *know and acknowledge God* to be the only true God and our God, and to *worship and glorify him accordingly;* and this terse statement is expanded in the Larger into nearly as many specifications, covering in fact the whole sum and body of our duty toward him. Such devout recognition of the existence and unique supremacy of God in himself, and of his relations to man as his creature, is in a word the grand primary obligation of all mankind—an obligation which no one can any more throw aside than he can shake off his essential immortality. And by way of emphasis it is added that the phrase, *before me*, teaches that this God who seeth all things, taketh special notice of, and is much displeased with, *the sin of having any other God:* and that this fact should be a powerful argument both to dissuade us from this sin in whatever form or degree, and to incite us to do all that we do *as in his sight and for his glory*. In these words, therefore, we have the foundation of all true religion, and the corner-stone of all acceptable belief and service: thus to know God is religion, and thus to serve and honor him is life, spiritual and everlasting.

As the first commandment demands the cordial recognition of God in his existence and supremacy and his relationship to man, so the second requires the like recognition of him as a Spirit, to be alone worshiped in spirit and in truth, as our Lord explicitly taught. As Spirit, pure and absolute, *invisible, and without body, parts or passions*, God cannot be represented by any image whatsoever, whether found on earth or in the air or sea. While we may in figures of speech represent him in imagery drawn from the various spheres of human experience or observation, we are ever to bear in mind the merely rhetorical quality of all such representations. The conception of God belongs, like that of space or force or law, to what Hamilton happily describes as the unpicturable notions of the human intelligence. To worship him by images, or as in any way incarnated in physical symbols, or

indeed in any manner not appointed in Scripture, is in a word that second great sin of the race—the sin of idolatry. The Larger Catechism affirms (109) that the making any such representation of God, or of any of the three Persons in the Godhead, either inwardly in our minds, or outwardly in any likeness of any creature, with a view to the worship of Deity in or by such image, is a direct violation of this searching commandment. Among the scandals excluding from the sacrament the Assembly expressly named the buying, selling, giving or keeping any images or pictures of the Trinity or any Person thereof, for the sake of devotion or out of esteem of the same: Minutes, 183–4. The Catechism also forbids the making of any representation of the feigned deities of heathenism, and all worship of them or service in their honor. In like manner, all superstitious devices which corrupt the true worship, by adding to it or taking from it, whether invented by ourselves or received by tradition from others under any title of antiquity or custom or devotion, are classed with the idolatries of paganism,—a clause intended doubtless to carry in it a condemnation of the accumulated ceremonials and mummeries of Rome. It was more than once proposed in the Assembly to add *tolerating a false religion* among the sins condemned by the second commandment; but the same end was sufficiently gained by adding a clause of like import to the duties enjoined in that command. One illustration of the temper of the Assembly at this point appears in the petition addressed to Parliament at the outset of their deliberations, that all monuments of idolatry and superstition, but *more especially the whole body and practice of papacy*, may be totally abolished by law. Sacrilege and simony, neglect or contempt of the appointed ordinances of religion, and all opposition to such forms of worship as God has prescribed for the promotion of his glory and the culture of true piety, are also included in that class of sins against the divine spirituality of which the gross idolatries of the heathen world furnish the most offensive illustration.

Over against the sins thus enumerated and forbidden, are placed by implication the corresponding duties which all men are bound to regard,—summed up (108) in the receiving, observing and keeping pure and entire, *all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his Word.* Among these are specified prayer and thanksgiving in the name of Christ, the reading and hearing and preaching of the truths of Scripture, the administration of the sacraments, the maintenance of church government and discipline, and also fasting and the making of religious vows

and oaths in the name of God. And it is a suggestive illustration of the temper of the times that there is added as an important part of this obligation the disapproving and detesting and opposing of all false worship, in which the ceremonies and ritual of the papal communion were doubtless included. The primitive Protestantism, especially in the Reformed communions, was strongly opposed to all pictures, even of Christ, in the sanctuaries, as savoring of superstition, if not of idolatry: see Second Helv. Conf. Ch. IV. The adoration of such scenic representations, or of symbols such as the cross, is clearly a violation of the prescribed rule of spiritual devotion.

The fact that reasons for obedience are appended to three of the Ten Commandments, two in the form of solemn warning and one in the winning aspect of promise, is one of marked significance. And it has been justly suggested that, though these reasons are connected directly with only three, they apply as truly in the form both of promise and of warning to the other seven commands,—becoming no less really so many incentives to obedience to the Decalogue in every part. The special reason appended to the second commandment is worthy of careful notice. Idolatry in all these multiplied forms must be prohibited, and the true worship of God as a Spirit maintained in its full spirituality and force, because this Jehovah is, as he here declares, *a jealous God*,—jealous in the sustaining of his rightful authority and claim,—jealous also in respect to the worship and service properly due to him and to him alone,—and jealous in the sense of indignation against not only all idolatry and reverence for the false deities of heathenism, but also against any and all deviations or failures in the observance of that adoration which is properly his right, though this should appear even within his own church, or in his own elect. The question whether it is just to visit judicially the iniquity of the fathers, in these aspects of it, upon the children even unto the third and fourth generation, is a part of the more comprehensive question whether it is wise and just and good in God to bind our race together in such constitutional and representative unity as makes each man and each generation an actual and essential factor in the lives and destinies of the men and the generations that follow them. That this organic union is a blessing more than a curse is illustrated in this instance in the corresponding declaration, that the mercies poured out so benignantly on those who abhor idolatry and cultivate true spiritual worship, are by the same law of organic unity carried down to their posterity, not for three or four, but for a thousand, or an uncounted number of generations.

And in view of this correlated fact, are we not forbidden to challenge the sovereign arrangement here illustrated, and encouraged rather to rejoice in the assurance that grace as well as sin flows down from parent to child, and from one generation of believers to another, even through long ages of holy and blessed experience?

Postponing the further consideration of the matter of divine worship until it arises again in conjunction with the doctrine of the Church and its sacraments and ordinances, we may turn to the third commandment which stands in such living relations to the two preceding commands as inculcating together with them the comprehensive and primary obligation, not of the Hebrews only, but of all men through all time toward God as the Creator and Lord and Father of all. The term, *name*, appears often in Scripture, and in a variety of associations and of meanings, as descriptive not merely of the titles properly applied to God, but also of all those attributes and activities which these titles suggest. In this commandment it is doubtless used to signify, in the terse phrase of the Shorter Catechism (55), *anything whereby God maketh himself known*. In the Larger (112), the definition is specialized to include titles, attributes, ordinances, the word (or revelation), sacraments, prayer, oaths, vows, lots, divine works, and whatever else there is by which God makes himself known to men. And the duty enjoined is the holy and reverent use of all these *in thought, meditation, word and writing*, by an holy profession, and answerable conversation, to the glory of God and the good of ourselves and others. Nor can it be said by any faithful student of the Bible either that the significant word, name, is here too broadly defined, or that the corresponding duty is too comprehensively or strongly enforced. He who justly apprehends the high and solemn doctrine of the two preceding commands as to the existence and spirituality, the relationship and supremacy of God as Lord over all, will not fail to discover the manifold significance of every name he bears, or to appreciate the obligation of the entire race of man to revere such names, and to bow down in constant and holy reverence before him who condescends through them to make himself known to the world.

The sin of profanity, of which open blasphemy is the most awful illustration, stands out, in close conjunction with the sins of atheistic unbelief and idolatry, as one of the primal, flagrant and almost universal crimes of mankind. The prohibition here solemnly pronounced does not relate merely to the failure to use the name of God in the reverent way just described, but to the abuse of that name (L. C. 113) in *an ignorant, vain, irreverent, profane,*

superstitious, wicked mentioning or otherwise using the divine titles, attributes, ordinances or works, by blaspheming or perjury; also all *sinful cursing, oaths, vows and lots;* violating of our oaths and vows if lawful, and fulfilling of them if of things unlawful; also all murmuring and quarreling at and curious *prying into and misapplying of the divine decrees and providences;* also, the misinterpreting, misapplying, or any way perverting the Word, or any part of it, to profane jests, curious and unprofitable questions, vain janglings, or the maintaining of false doctrines; also, abusing the Word or the creatures or anything contained under the name of God, to charms or sinful lusts or practices; also the maligning, scorning, reviling or any wise *opposing of the divine truth, grace and ways;* also, the making profession of religion in hypocrisy or for sinister ends; or being ashamed of it or a shame to it, by uncomfortable, unwise, unfruitful and offensive walking, or backsliding from it. This remarkable definition is quoted here in full, not merely for its singular comprehensiveness and cogency, but as a striking illustration of the wide thoughtfulness, the intense spirituality, and the broad and deep religious experience of the men who framed it. Nor can it be said that the definition is too broad or too deep or penetrating: no one among the offences named can properly be thrown out from the category in our interpretation of the inclusive phrase, *taking the name of God in vain.*

Like the second command, a solemn reason is appended to this comprehensive injunction: *The Lord will not hold him guiltless,* who in any form commits this heinous offence against him and his prerogatives. Many minor forms of this offence may, as the Catechism (114) intimates, escape the censures and punishment of men, but he who is the Lord over all will not acquit or spare those who sin thus grievously against him, and will by no means *suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.* God is not only jealous of his name and prerogatives, as he may justly be, but with justice he may and does pronounce his condemnation and bring condign punishment on those who thus offend. Nor are we at liberty to limit this punitive visitation altogether, though at the first it was limited primarily, to the inflictions of the present life. Although the blasphemer and the profane man should escape divine judgment here, they must face it hereafter. For certainly the sin of blasphemy or profanity is no less culpable in the sight of God than that of idolatry or of atheistic unbelief. It is indicative of a state of soul as far estranged from him as that of the skeptic or the idolater,—a state of soul wherein he is not

enthroned as he has the intrinsic right to be, and wherein the true and pure throb of religious love and devotion is never felt. Even in those minor forms which society easily condones, and which originate often in thoughtless ignorance or in moments of excitement, the taking of the names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words or works of God *in vain*, remains an offence against reason and conscience, and a crime which the Being thus despised and contemned will not, can not justly, suffer to pass without condemnation here or hereafter.*

7. The first Table: fourth and fifth commandments: the Sabbath.

The right of the fourth commandment to an enduring place and authoritativeness among the other enactments of the Sinaitic code has often been questioned. Some of the early Fathers pronounced it a ceremonial and shadowy command, designed for the Hebrews only, and therefore becoming void under the Gospel, with the other elements of the ceremonial law. Zwingli doubtless referred to it, as well as to the other holy days observed by Rome, in the sweeping declaration, (25) that time and place are in the power of man —not man in their power: and that those who bind the pious to place and time, defraud them and rob them of their Christian freedom. The position of Luther as to the obligatoriness of the commandment is well known. The Augsburg Confession

*It is a noteworthy fact that this solemn injunction is endorsed by civil legislation in Christian countries generally. In such countries blasphemy and profanity are regarded as offences indictable at common law. Blasphemy is defined in civil procedure as a public denial of the being or attributes or relations of God, or contumelious reproaches of Christ, or of the Holy Ghost, or scoffing at the Scriptures as the Word of God. And as such it is condemned by law, on the ground that it is a gross violation of decency and good order, injurious to the essential interests of civil society, and detrimental to the administration of justice. Profane swearing, loudly uttered and with repetition, is condemned in like manner because of its tendency to disturb the peace, corrupt the morals of the community, and undermine the foundation of Christianity. Hence profanity and blasphemy are punishable offences in the civil courts,—the aim of such punishment being, not to prevent free and sincere discussion even of the fundamental question whether God exists, or to restrict full liberty of thought or conscience in the matter of religions belief or expression, but to preserve the public peace and order by an outward respect for the prevalent religion of the country. It certainly is not necessary to liberty of thought or conscience that one should be permitted without restraint to vilify religion, or to profane the name of God, or to do or say aught that shall tend to impair in other minds due veneration for him as the creator and governor and judge of the world: Anderson, Law Dict.

directly affirmed (Part Sec: VII) that the Scripture (the New Test.) has abrogated the Sabbath, and that the observance of either the seventh or the first day of the week, is not a necessity, under the Christian law of liberty. Calvin enjoins observance of the day, not so much on the ground of its authoritativeness as a part of the Decalogue, but rather because it is—to use his own phrase—a remedy necessary to the preservation of the church, and a help in personal meditation and devotion. It should be added that Calvin also lays special stress on the Sabbath as an emblem of the spiritual and eternal rest promised to the people of God,—an argument in its favor not infrequently urged by the divines of the seventeenth century. Luther, while questioning the authority of the commandment, is no less earnest than Calvin—as his Larger Catechism shows—in insisting that the day should be honored, not merely by cessation from labor, but by attending divine service, hearing the Word faithfully, and being employed in all holy words and actions. The chief Helvetic Confession (XXIV) represents what was probably the highest teaching of the Reformed churches of that date, in the statement that the Sabbath should be devoted to the worship of God and to holy rest;—adding, however, the practical remark that the day should be observed in Christian freedom, not with Jewish superstition, and that we ought not to believe that one day is in itself really holier than others. Among the Post-Acta of the Synod of Dort appears a deliverance, declaring that in the fourth commandment there is both a ceremonial and a moral element, and that while the ceremonial element is abolished, the moral element is still obligatory on all Christians, and the day therefore ought to be consecrated to divine worship, with cessation from all servile labors excepting those which spring from charity and present necessity, and also from all recreations which hinder the worship of God.

A more marked advance beyond the doctrine of the sixteenth century, whether Reformed or Lutheran, is seen in the chapter on Religious Worship (XXI) in the Westminster Confession: God in his Word *by a positive, moral and perpetual commandment*, binding all men in all ages, hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a Sabbath to be kept holy unto him . . . . and this observance is *to be continued unto the end of the world.* The same chapter further teaches that the day is kept holy unto the Lord when men, after a due preparing of their hearts and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up

the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy. It is hardly necessary to add to this clear and strong statement the explanatory answers in the two Catechisms, which harmonize fully with the doctrine of the Confession, but do not go beyond it in either content or form.

The holy day thus recognized was instituted primarily at the creation (L. C. 20), when God rested or ceased from his creative work, so far at least as the earth and man were included. Traces of the day as a divine institution appear early in the Scriptures, in the periods of seven days there frequently mentioned, and especially in conjunction with the kindred institution of sacrifices. It is also obvious that the Israelites observed the day before the Exodus, so that the Sinaitic command, with its suggestive word, *remember*, was simply a more formal ordaining of the day as one of worship, in close conjunction with the larger development of worship itself under the Aaronic cultus. This more formal enactment by no means proves that the Sabbath was made a consecrated time first through the Decalogue, nor does the celebration of the day as a commemoration of the deliverance from the Egyptian house of bondage, according to Deuteronomy, exclude its primary use as a commemoration of the sublime creative act. The numerous references scattered through not only the Mosaic books but the later historical books also and the psalms and prophecies, show conclusively that in the Hebrew mind creation and providential preservation as reasons and incentives were habitually blended in the observance and enjoyment of this consecrated time.

The Confession (XXI: vii) also recognizes the change of sacred time in the statement that *from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ* the seventh or last day of the week was the appointed Sabbath; but that *from that resurrection*, and in commemoration of that crowning event in the divine scheme of grace, the first day became *the Christian Sabbath*, and is to remain such *to the end of the world*. A threefold instituting of the day, to celebrate not merely creation and providence, but also salvation through a risen Savior, is here affirmed,—the day conveying to the Christian not only all that it represented to the Hebrew, but also the still more glorious fact of the deliverance of the soul from sin, and the new life and manhood created in Christ Jesus. The intent and design of the day are thus in the present dispensation immensely broadened, and its uses are more numerous, exalted and edifying to the soul. The worship and work of the

Christian Church, its growth and influence in human life, are with each new century centering more and more in and around the Sabbath: and it may well be anticipated that as the Church develops in character and in capacity for usefulness, the Christian Sabbath will become more and more precious in its uses and its blessings even to the end of time. While therefore the change of day rests on no express direction from our Lord, and seems rather to have grown up spontaneously in conjunction with his successive revelations of himself after his resurrection, that change by no means weakens the obligation of all men to observe the Sabbath in its threefold significance and beauty, as the sacred time appointed of God—the blessed Day of days.

The Confession claims (XXI: vii) that it is of the law of nature as well as a positive institute of Scripture that some due proportion of time should be set apart for the worship of Deity; thus anticipating the broad and strong argument for the Sabbath on natural grounds which has been urged, in such effective forms, in more recent periods. The Larger Catechism teaches (118) that the law of the Sabbath has a certain basis also in the constitution of the family,—the charge to keep it being specially directed to governors of households and other superiors; they being bound not only to keep the day themselves, but to see that it is observed by all those who are under their control. In the original Symbol, as accepted by the Scotch churches, the civil magistrate also is said (XXIII: iii) to be empowered to require that all the ordinances of God (the Sabbath doubtless included) be *duly settled, administered and observed:* and in the American Symbol, as modified at the time of its adoption, it is declared to be the duty of every such magistrate to see that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance, as well on the Sabbath as at other times. This is in harmony with the legislation in support of the Christian Sabbath which from Constantine and Theodosius, from Charlemagne and Alfred, has been enacted in most civilized lands, and which in forms more or less positive now stands among the imperative statutes not only of the American States, but also of Britain and the countries of northern and central Europe. In such legislation works of necessity and mercy, works to which men are compelled by some unavoidable constraint of circumstances or to which they are moved by motives not of gain but of kindness and humanity, are allowed. But the carrying on of ordinary avocations for the pecuniary advantage to be derived therefrom, what is styled common labor, manual not mental,

is directly forbidden: so also are all hunting and sporting, and all theatrical and other forms of immoral amusement. Such legislation is justified by some authorities on the ground that it is essential as a police regulation simply, in the interest of good order and the welfare of society; by other authorities it is justified on the broader ground that religion, and eminently the Christian religion, may so far forth justly claim the protection of civil law. In either view such legislation is not, in the words of Cooley, to be regarded as an encroachment on the religious liberty of the people, even though it be enacted in the interest of the Christian religion.*

The Confession is wisely silent respecting the specific relations between the civil and the religious Sabbath, for the reason that the amount and cogency of such legislation must be determined by conditions widely variant in different lands and times. It is also wisely silent as to the multitude of specific problems presenting themselves at different periods, with respect to the particular privileges and duties of Christians in their use of the holy day,—following apparently the good rule laid down in the opening chapter on the Scriptures, that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, *which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence*, if only the general rules of the Word are faithfully observed. In this sense and under these limitations, the fourth commandment is as truly *positive, moral and perpetual*, binding all men in all ages, as any other commandment in the Decalogue; and while the Decalogue stands as a divine law for mankind under the Christian as well as under the Hebraic dispensation, so long will the Christian Sabbath stand as an obligation resting individually on

*BLACKSTONE (Com. *in loc*) bears emphatic testimony to the value of the civil Sabbath in the following words: Besides the notorious indecency and scandal of permitting any secular business to be publicly transacted on that day in a country professing Christianity, and the corruption of morals which usually follows its profanation, the keeping one day in seven holy, as a time of relaxation and refreshment as well as for public worship, is of admirable service to the state, considered merely as a civil institution. It humanizes, by the help of conversation and society, the manners of the lower classes, which would otherwise degenerate into a sordid ferocity and savage selfishness of spirit: it enables the industrious workman to pursue his occupation in the ensuing week with health and cheerfulness: it imprints on the minds of the people that sense of their duty to God so necessary to make them good citizens, but which yet would be worn out and defaced by an unremitted continuance of labor, without any stated times of recalling them to the worship of their Maker: See Ringgold, Legal Aspects of the First Day of the Week.

all men, but eminently on all who claim to be disciples of Christ. He indeed taught that the Sabbath was made for man, and is to be used in the free temper of the Gospel, and himself wrought deeds of necessity and of mercy on that holy day; yet in no circumstances did he ever ignore or minify the Sinaitic command to remember the day and keep it holy. Rather is it due to his teaching and influence that what was at first a Jewish ordinance, to be enforced with technical strictness, has now become a glorious institution, wide as the race in its sweep, and full of vast and growing benediction to all who loyally accept and observe it.

Regarding the fifth commandment as a transitional ordinance, setting forth an obligation closely allied to those enforced in the four commandments preceding, we may embody its teaching under the comprehensive term, piety, as used by Paul in his first letter to Timothy—piety toward the parents to whom the life of the child is due, and by whose provident care and love that life has throughout infancy and youth been sustained. Their claim to honor and affection, and to all the responsive ministries of which the child is capable, is obviously the highest human analogue to that supreme claim which God himself rightly holds. The term, Father, is the term that he accepts and uses as expressive of a relationship to man which is antecedent even to that indicated by the term, Sovereign; and in like manner the tie which binds together the human father and his child is the most fundamental, the most sacred, the most tender of all the bonds which exist in human life. In a father, says Calvin (Inst. B. II: Ch. 8), we ought to recognize something divine; for it is not without reason that he bears one of the titles of the Deity. The obligations which parents sustain toward their offspring, and the corresponding duties which children owe to parents, are thus in their nature not only primary but superior to any which either class can come under, in any other human relation. As the family comes before the state, and as the law of the household is the primal and supreme law while the family exists in its unity, so the injunction to honor father and mother shines out with a peculiar lustre, and with a tender solemnity also, such as no other obligation in life can equal. It has its abundant warrant, not only in the divine declaration, but in the very nature of things, and its practical necessity as a part of the moral order of the world.

The Larger Catechism (124–126) broadens the command by including in it not only natural parents, but *all superiors in age and gifts*, and especially those who by any divine ordinance are set *in*

any place of authority, whether in family, church or commonwealth. It carries the injunction still farther by classifying all persons as either superiors or inferiors or equals, and by defining at length the various duties which members of each of these classes owe to members of the others—superiors to inferiors as well as inferiors to superiors, and equals to equals in whatever relation. It also describes in detail the sins or offences which the members of any one of these classes may commit against the members of any other. May it not be questioned whether these very broad generalizations, though interesting and suggestive in themselves, are really warranted by or were contemplated in the commandment as originally given: and also whether they do not tend to draw the mind away from that most sacred duty of honoring father and mother supremely, which after all stands out before us as far above any obligation which men as superiors or inferiors or equals can sustain toward each other, outside of the household? The explanation that the parental claim is here employed representatively, and that it includes all types of rightful authority, and is selected because it most easily enforces the general principle involved, hardly seems consistent with the special language used. Though it may be true, as Oehler and others have claimed, that a foundation is laid in this commandment for the sanctification of all social life, in virtue of the principle of divine authority recognizable in it, still this is not the primary or chief aim of the injunction.

If, on the other hand, we confine our range of thought chiefly if not wholly within the family, as seems more legitimate, we shall still discern at once a multitude of specific and important duties on the part of children, which the term, *honor* and the corresponding term, piety, so well suggest: affection, reverence, obedience, submission to just correction, imitating good example, fidelity to parental interests, loyalty to parental name and honor, bearing with infirmity, and dutiful ministrations in the time of old age. *Covering them in love*, is the expressive phrase which the Catechism (127) employs in describing this filial obligation, and *so living as to be an honor to them* is a corresponding phrase, equally comprehensive and expressive. The sins of which children may be guilty are described (128) with equal minuteness; neglect of the services and duties due to parents, envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against their persons and places in their lawful commands, counsels and corrections; cursing, mocking, and all such refractory and scandalous carriage or conduct as becomes a shame and dishonor to them and to their

government. The obligations of parents toward their children, and the sins of which they may be guilty in this relation by both act and neglect, are set forth with corresponding minuteness and solemnity. The two chapters in the Directory for Worship, on the ordinance of baptism (VIII) and family worship (XVI) may well be studied in this connection: also Larger Catechism, 165–167.

As in the second and third commandments we find solemn warnings against disobedience appended by way of enforcing the obligations imposed, so here we find a most beautiful promise in the words, *that thy days may be long in the land.* In the record in Deuteronomy two suggestive clauses are added: *as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that it may go well with thee:* both possibly introduced by some later hand, for the purpose of illustrating and emphasizing the original command. It is worthy of note also that, while divine threatenings sound out in conjunction with the antecedent commands, this is as Paul suggests the first commandment with promise only—as if God would specially sanctify the household, and encourage children to obedience, by special assurance of his fatherly interest and benediction. Primarily this promise undoubtedly applied to the wandering Hebrews in the desert, and to the goodly land which God had pledged himself to give to Abraham and his descendants. In this specific form the divine pledge was abundantly fulfilled in the fair heritage of Canaan, long held by the Israelites as their own, and never lost until they had disobeyed the divine commands at a thousand points, and proved themselves unworthy of the parental love which God had bestowed upon them. Among the heinous offences of which as a people they were guilty, our Lord solemnly emphasized the fact that they had made void the law—this particular commandment—by their pharisaic traditions: and in that light the promise, as he implied, changed itself into a warning direct and terrible.

But the promise is as broad as the obligation to which it is appended: the blessing of heaven in length of days and in temporal as well as spiritual prosperity is pledged through all time to the children who in the biblical sense honor their parents, father and mother, according to the commandment. Such a promise, like many other promises of Holy Writ, is to be interpreted according to the spirit rather than by the letter, since loving and obedient children are sometimes removed from life before their parents, and since on the other hand disobedient and rebellious children may live to old age, fattening ungratefully upon the riches which

diligent parents have laid up in store for them, but to which in the eye of God they have no rightful claim. Yet in the interactions of the divine administration, such length of days spent in wicked indulgence may itself become a curse, while God may fully recompense in other sufficient ways those dutiful children who have been earlier removed from the present life. After all, the general rule prevails, that obedience to this command brings blessing, if not in the specific form of length of days, still in general prosperity such as the phrase in Deuteronomy, *that it may go well with thee*, certainly indicates, and in spiritual bestowments also, such as furnish to filial children an abundant compensation. Nor should it be forgotten, on the other hand, that the divine condemnation rests even in this world on every child that disobeys this just injunction. Monsters are they rather than men, exclaimed the illustrious sage and teacher of Geneva, in his exposition of this command. Well said Agur, the son of Jakeh, in words that thrill us by their solemnity: The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

8. The Second Table: Duties toward man: sins against man.

In turning from the first to the second table of the Decalogue, we pass over from the domain of piety to the domain of equity—from the contemplation of the duties which all men alike owe to God and to their parents as his representatives, to the consideration of those duties which in the various other relations of life men owe to one another. Four primal classes of sin are here solemnly prohibited; murder, adultery, theft, slander: in other words, sin against the body, sin against purity, sin against property, and sin against character. We do not need the express comment of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount to assure us that in the matter of murder and adultery, and by implication also in the matter of theft and slander, the original commandment reaches far beyond the single crime specified, and includes all minor varieties of that crime, and even the disposition or desire to commit such sin in whatever form. The Mosaic code itself condemns not merely the act of killing, but maiming and wounding and other injury to the bodily person, and even prescribes with what seems like excessive severity the penalty due to such minor offences—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth; and the later books of the Old Testament, in both precept and example, show that the sixth commandment was regarded

by the Hebrews throughout their history as covering all that class of crimes of which the actual killing of another, except when directly prescribed by Levitic law, was the most heinous and awful illustration. In like manner adultery and robbery and false witnessing were condemned by that code, and by the prophets and teachers of the Hebraic dispensation, in all their minor as well as in their chief and most glaring varieties. Our Lord therefore was simply enforcing in its fullness the Old Testament law, when he declared that he who even looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. So his impressive addition of the words, Defraud not, to the list of the laws of the second table as quoted to the young ruler, indicate not another commandment but rather a general rule of life, applicable not only to theft but also to murder and adultery and slander—all of which, even in their minor forms, involve the element of fraudulency.

Accordingly the Shorter Catechism declares (68–69) that the sixth commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or *whatever tendeth thereunto*, and on the other hand enjoins the obligation to make all lawful endeavor to preserve our own life, and the life of others. It is noticeable that in the exposition of this command, and also in that of the three commandments following, our duty to ourselves is placed before our duty to others. In this instance suicide is presented as the first and in some sense the supreme form of murder, and care for the preservation of our own life as even taking precedence of our obligation to preserve the lives of others. So the seventh is said (71–72) to forbid *all unchaste thoughts, words and actions*, and to require the preservation of our own chastity and that of others in heart, speech and behavior. The eighth forbids (74–75) whatever doth or may hinder our own wealth or outward estate or that of our neighbors; and commends the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of both ourselves and others. And the ninth, with like comprehensiveness (77–78) forbids on one hand whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own good name or the good name of others, and on the other hand requires the *maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man*, and of our own good name and that of our neighbor,—especially, it is added, in witness-bearing, as in civil or ecclesiastical courts. Such is the broad scope of these four commands according, not merely to the Catechisms of Westminster, but to those of Heidelberg and of Luther, and to the Protestant symbolism and exposition universally.

Though the earlier formularies are less specific and positive, it is doubtful whether a single expression can be found in any of the Protestant creeds, that indicates the least degree of swerving from the high and searching doctrine taught by the Assembly.

The Larger Catechism proceeds to a remarkable specialization and amplification of these obligations, in such fullness as almost to overwhelm us. It is inexpedient here to refer to the scores of particular offences, and the scores of particular duties, descending even to very small detail, which are named in the answers under these four heads. One curious illustration, bearing on the question of temperance or total abstinence, may be mentioned: among the eighteen or twenty sins said to be forbidden by the sixth commandment is the *immoderate use of meat, drink, labor and recreations:* and among the twenty-five or thirty duties enjoined is *a sober use of meat, drink, physic, sleep, labor and recreations.* The biblical references also (more than three hundred in number), appended to these answers by the Assembly on the request of Parliament, show both how comprehensive their interpretation of the commandments was, and how thoroughly they planted their teaching on the authoritative Scriptures. It would be hard to name any sin or any duty properly included within these four main divisions, which is not here specified or implied, or for whose recognition there is not some suitable inspired justification. In fact, we have in this section of the Larger Catechism what it would not be improper to describe as a full, if not complete system of practical ethics, applicable not to the Hebrews only but to all men, and efficient in every relation of human life through all time. Had the Westminster divines done nothing more than to enumerate this list of sins to be avoided and of duties to be done, for the guidance of their own generation, and of those who should come after them in the English-speaking sections of Christendom, they would have done a work of inestimable value in itself, and would have been recognized as among the ablest teachers of sound and high morality, on the foundation of Scripture, which Protestantism in any age has produced.

It is a noteworthy fact, demonstrative of the divine origin of the Decalogue, that its four-fold division of offences has passed in substance into the criminal legislation of most civilized lands, and that its elevated ethical teaching and temper have influenced so widely and permanently the jurisprudence of mankind. That remarkable code does not indeed treat so much of those crimes against the state or against the public good which, in one form or another, occupy so large a place in modern legislation. It lays

small stress relatively on the public or general relations of the four classes of offences which it so strongly condemns: in other words, it is essentially a personal code, dealing simply with the relations subsisting between man and man,—civil rather than criminal, in the technical sense of these terms. We know indeed that the public good, the welfare of organized society, is involved inextricably in the consequences of individual action; and modern jurisprudence is justified in ranking these general effects of conduct even higher than any effects experienced by the individual who has been injured through any transgression. Yet this social and public aspect of wrong-doing is much less conspicuous in such primitive forms of society as that of the Hebrews at the Exodus: and the Decalogue was wisely adjusted first of all to such a primitive condition and grade of development. By the very form of its prohibitions and commands it was peculiarly fitted to awaken among such a people that sense of personal responsibility, that consciousness of personal guilt in view of wrong done to another person, which is after all fundamental in the application of law to human conduct, even in the highest forms of civilization. The remarkable fact is that, notwithstanding this special adaptation, it still survives through the ages as at once the norm and the animating principle in the framing and the administration of law in all Christian lands, and seems destined to hold its place as an authoritative rule for man and for society so long as the sovereignty of God is recognized in the earth.

9. The Tenth Commandment: Law in the Old Testament.

The tenth commandment may properly be regarded, like the fifth, as transitional in its purpose and scope,—a command designed to bring into special view the truth that God is not content with the prohibition of overt action, or even with the enjoining of those positive duties which as acts stand in antithesis with the several forms of sin condemned expressly in the Decalogue. In the word, *covet*, it introduces a deeper and broader view of human obligation, as including not only outward conduct whether forbidden or required, but also the disposition or state of heart which underlies all action. It is clearly a mistake, although supported by the great name of Augustine and by subsequent church usage, to hold that there are two commands against such coveting: the variation in the order in which the objects coveted are named in Exodus and Deuteronomy, does not justify such a distinction. Coveting is essentially the same thing, whether the object coveted be a wife, a house, a manservant, a maidservant, an ox or ass, or

anything else which rightfully belongs to another. It is the inordinate desire to obtain such object in an unlawful way, or without regard to the rights and claims of its possessor. We are indeed taught by an apostle to covet or desire earnestly the best gifts, such as the gift of prophecy or of speaking with tongues, but such desire involves no inclination to take away from others any corresponding gifts which they may possess: the same apostle, not inconsistently, pronounces covetousness to be akin to idolatry, and declares that it ought not to be so much as named among saints. Both the New Testament and the Old contain abundant warnings against this wicked wishing for what does not belong to us, this desire to have what others possess, though the desire may lie as a secret impulse in the soul, never emerging into volition or overt action. Covetousness as thus defined is like the love of money, a root of all other evil,—a germinating and instigating form of wickedness, which may lead him who indulges it on to theft or adultery or murder, or—as in the case mentioned by our Lord—to impiety and ingratitude toward parents. In its inmost principle of selfishness it may not only violate in spirit every command of the second table, but may even assail the rights of God and inordinately desire for itself what belongs to him alone.

In this view of the subject, the commandment, *Thou shalt not covet*, is fitly placed at the end of the Decalogue as a comprehending and ultimate prohibition, throwing back its solemn warning over all the forbidding and the enjoining that had preceded it. The two Catechisms agree with this view in their definition of the command as forbidding all discontentment with our own estate, and all envying and grieving at the good of our neighbor, together with *all inordinate motions or affections to anything that is his;* and also as requiring from us full contentment with our own condition, and such *a charitable frame of the whole soul toward our neighbor*, as that all our inward motions and affections toward him tend unto and further all that good which is his. Luther, dividing the commandment into two after Augustine, teaches, first, that we should so fear and love God as not to try to defraud our neighbor of his inheritance or home, or obtain it under any pretext of a legal right, but rather should aid and assist him to keep it; and secondly, that we must so love and fear God as not to detach, extort or alienate from our neighbor his wife, servants or cattle, but rather induce them to stay with him and do their duty: Larger Catechism, *in loc.* The Catechism of Heidelberg more tersely but also more profoundly sums up the whole in

the statement, that we must not suffer even the least inclination or thought against any of the commandments to enter our hearts, but rather with the whole heart must continually hate all sin, and take pleasure in all righteousness. Ursinus in his commentary on that Catechism teaches that the design and end of this command is to secure the internal obedience and regulation of all our affections toward God, and toward all men as our neighbors; and declares that this is by no means a superfluous commandment, but one added to the rest, or superinduced upon them, as a comprehensive rule and interpretation.

The tenth commandment, thus expounded, becomes an interesting illustration of the general method of God in the evolution of his moral law during the patriarchal and Hebraic dispensations. As at Eden, so for many subsequent centuries, *Thou shalt not*, was the prevalent form assumed by the divine injunctions in the process of developing and culturing the race ethically,—though not unmingled with some positive requisitions, such as appear in the institution of sacrifices and of the Sabbath. At length, as the infantile race became able to bear it, the more positive element came more openly into play, blending with the anteceding prohibitions; *Thou shalt*, standing out not in antagonism but in close correlation to the primitive, *Thou shalt not*. In a similar way the first prohibitions related almost exclusively to outward and overt acts, but at length it became practicable to extend the divine sway more distinctly over the volitions, the inward desires and impulses of men. As on one side the constant movement was from the negative to the positive, so on another side there was a continuous movement from the outer to the inner life of man,—God constantly aiming to include ultimately the entire moral nature and being within the range of his educational and regulative law. Traces of such a twofold movement appear at various points even before the flood, and during the long patriarchal era, and the period of the captivity in Egypt. But in the Decalogue the disciplinary process becomes still more visible, and in the final command, *Thou shalt not covet*, we discern a transition which was to be the beginning of a new stage of moral culture and life for the Hebrews and through them for mankind.

It would be a serious mistake to suppose that in this evolutionary process the prohibitions were retired as the positive requisitions were introduced, or that overt actions ceased to be significant when the inner life was thus brought consciously under the divine jurisdiction. As the river carries on in its broadening current the waters of the fountain where it originated, and those

of every tributary streamlet in its course, so each positive requisition carried the correlative prohibition in its bosom, and each new statute, laid upon the conscience of the inward man, represented not with less but with augmented force the law that applied primarily to overt conduct only. But as we pass onward through the era of Joshua and the Judges and Samuel, through the subsequent period of the Kings and Chronicles, we discern at a hundred points the patient, steady, beautiful unfolding of the divine law in more spiritual and commanding aspects,—the Mosaic economy and ceremonials contributing their proportion age after age to the impressive development. In the Psalms, (xix, cxix, and others) we see that law constantly increasing in spirituality and in holy force,—no longer a cluster of negations but an orderly array and system of positive precepts,—no longer a rule of outward action only, but a penetrating, searching, commanding code to which the entire moral man, without and within, is forevermore to be subject. In the prophetical writings, especially in those which have most to say of the coming Messiah and of his kingdom, this process is more and more visibly continued: the law comes out progressively in forms more spiritual and more glorious: love toward God and holy obedience to his will, and corresponding love toward man in whatever place or relation, become more and more the animating principle of life in both action and feeling. At last the sacred evolution reaches the stage where, whether it shall succeed or shall fail to control and inspire the Jewish mind, it must pause awhile, until He should come whose mission in part it was not to destroy but to fulfill all divine law—to interpret the Decalogue in all its spiritual significance, and by his example and obedience to establish it more firmly than ever as the supreme rule and guide of human life while the world shall stand.

10. Law in the New Testament: three special characteristics.

It is an easy transition from law in the Old Testament, when thus rightly estimated, to law in the New Testament as enunciated by our Lord and commended by the apostles under the Gospel. It can hardly be regarded as an exaggeration in Luther to say, as he does at the close of his Larger Catechism, that no doctrine or discipline can ever be produced, which will be equal to the Ten Commandments, since they propose a type of character so exalted that no one is able through the powers of man to attain it, and whoever should attain it would become a heavenly, angelic being, far superior to all the

sanctity of the world. Yet in the New Testament, and specially in the teaching of Christ, these commandments assume a breadth of application, a dignity of claim, and a glory in fruitage, of which the devout Hebrew could have had no adequate appreciation or experience. Three things may here be specially noted: First, the marked widening of the area of human obligation already adverted to, especially through the application of the law to the inmost thoughts and intents of the heart. An inspired writer who well understood the divine purpose, has happily compared the law in this respect to a sword with double edge, not only cutting its way into and through all overt action, but piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and the marrow of character. As in the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord taught in the three instances of killing, of adultery and of false swearing, and again in the three religious duties of charitable giving, prayer, and fasting, so every requisition under the Gospel is first of all internal—a requisition respecting the state of heart, as something far deeper than any or all external obligation. Abundant testimony appears elsewhere both in his direct precepts and in his parables that Christ accepted no obedience, no service, but that of the heart, and that the kingdom which he sought to establish and enforce was primarily and chiefly a kingdom within the believing soul.

Catholicism at the Reformation and subsequently, in the interest of its theory of indulgence and absolution, attempted to draw the line of human responsibility at a more external point, affirming that while human acts and even positive volitions, cherished and carried into execution so far as practicable, are sinful in the light of the New Testament law, concupiscentia, or the experiencing of inward desires or passions which are not thus carried out in purpose or conduct, should not be viewed as culpable in the eye of that law. But Protestantism in its eager resistance to the sophistries and the wicked practices appearing in conjunction with this superficial and destructive teaching, held with the writer to the Hebrews that the very thoughts as well as intents of the heart are properly amenable to divine law. The Decree of the Council of Trent states the Roman position guardedly, affirming that in the case of those born again, concupiscence, while it is of sin and inclines to sin, is not in the judgment of the church truly and properly sin, and should not be called sin. But it cannot be doubted that this delusive dogma has led men in recent times and in the most highly developed sections of the church, to practical mischiefs of the most dangerous kind,—mischiefs which

Protestantism in large degree escaped by affirming that the whole man in every impulse and movement of his nature, physical as well as moral, is accountable to God under the Gospel. It is worthy of note that the Longer Catechism of the Greek Church agrees with Protestantism in pronouncing all concupiscence sinful, both because it betrays an impure soul and because it is the seed from which all sinful action springs. The Heidelberg Catechism expresses the general Protestant teaching in the statement (10) that God is terribly displeased with our inborn as well as actual sins and will punish them in just judgment; and (113) that we must not permit the least inclination or thought contrary to any divine command to enter our heart, but must rather with the whole heart hate all sin and find pleasure in all righteousness. The Formula of Concord (Art. I) condemned in terms the papal doctrine that depraved concupiscences are not sin but merely concreated conditions and essential properties of the corrupted nature, and held that original sin, as being itself sinful, is the fountain of evil thoughts and evil discoursings as well as evil deeds. The Thirty-Nine Articles (IX) directly affirm, in obvious antagonism to the dogma of Trent, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin,—a phrase altered by the Westminster divines in their revision of these Articles, so as to affirm positively that such concupiscence is always sinful. These illustrations show that evangelical Protestantism from the beginning repudiated the Roman casuistry on this subject, and affirmed that the corruption of our nature, as our own Confession declares (VI: v), is both itself, *and all the motions thereof*, truly and properly sin.

Secondly: law in the New Testament, as thus spiritualized and comprehensively applied, is also invested with greater authority, and thus is pressed home with increased cogency upon the reason and the conscience. The authoritativeness of the moral law in the antecedent dispensations was derived in part from what that law was seen to be in itself as something infinitely worthy of human obedience, but chiefly from the fact that it emanated from the Jehovah of the Hebrews—the Lord God who spoke the very words of the law at Sinai amid thunders and lightnings and superhuman voices, and who in the simple and solemn expression, *Thus saith the Lord*, made the claims of law forever sacred and supreme. But Christ came to fulfill the law in a still higher sense,—not only to spiritualize its precepts, as we have seen, but also to enforce them by his own word and personality. Law to the Christian means more than it could possibly mean to the Jew, because there stands behind it evermore the living Christ,

the incarnate Deity, enacting it afresh, not indeed in the manner of Sinai but in ways still more impressive, as they were more in harmony with the deepened spirituality of the various precepts. The Messiah thus came to give new authoritativeness to the law in two correlated ways, as the Son of Man and as the Son of God. As Son of Man, he made the law forever glorious by his own complete obedience to it, and by the illustration of its worth shining forth in his own perfect example. As Son of God, he endorsed the law even more impressively than the Jehovah of the Hebrews had ever done; surrounding it with all the splendors of an incarnated Deity; himself as God standing behind and above it, and strengthening it with all the resources of an authority as imperial, comprehensive. unchallengeable as it was visible. In the chapter now under review, it is expressly said that the obligation to obey the moral law is found not only *in regard of the matter contained* in it, but also *in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it:* and it is added in language which is too weak to convey the full reality, *neither doth Christ in the Gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.* During the debate in the Assembly on this chapter (Minutes, 272–4) it was at first resolved to add, after the statement respecting the authority of God the Creator, the words: from whom it should always have had that binding power though it had never received any corroboration from Christ in the Gospel. We are taught elsewhere that Christ is King over all, empowered to expand and enforce the law, and is also the Judge before whom the solemn question of obedience or disobedience to the law in deed and word and inmost thought is to be finally adjudicated. In his hands, therefore, the law assumes an authoritativeness, exhibits a right to demand implicit, perfect and perpetual obedience, such as it could not have had in the antecedent dispensations.

Thirdly: the law as thus made authoritative by Christ, is enforced by superadded sanctions on the side both of reward and of penalty. From the beginning God was pleased to urge obedience upon men, not only by the revelation to them of the inherent righteousness and worth of the law in itself, but also by acquainting them with the blessings that in his ordained constitution of things should follow due regard for its claims, and also with the miseries and the curse involved of necessity in all disobedience. In the terse language of the chapter, God while requiring exact and perpetual obedience, *promised life upon the fulfilling and threatened death upon the breach* of his holy law. Gerizim and Ebal, the mount of blessing and the mount of cursing, stand over against

each other throughout the Old Testament; and though at first the rewards and penalties appear to be temporal only—consequences experienced in this life rather than in a future state—still in the later stages of the revelation eternity is brought in more and more, as if to enforce the issues of time, and God encourages obedience by promises and discourages disobedience by warnings which can be realized only in a life far beyond the present state of being.

It is one of the criticisms of John Stuart Mill (Three Essays) that such use of sanctions is in itself unjustifiable, and is calculated to diminish in our estimation the superior incentive of the right as right, discerned by the reason, felt by the conscience. A wiser Mind than his saw that, whatever might be true of angels or of a race of perfect men, our weak and corrupted humanity, in disposition averse to holiness and ever disobedient in act, needed even from the experience of Eden onward whatever influence could in this additional way be brought to bear in securing obedience and in deterring mankind from sin. The fallacious reasoning of the philosopher is confuted, not only by observation of the conduct of men generally, but by the punitive legislation of all civilized nations, and by ten thousand illustrations in domestic and social life. It is a decisive fact that our Lord held forth the same doctrine of sanctions which the older Scriptures taught, but in forms and aspects even more impressive. While on one side he brought into clearer light than ever before the ineffable beauty of a genuinely holy life, and so commended obedience in itself more fully to all who heard his words or beheld his example, on the other side he brought eternity into human view as no patriarch or legislator, psalmist or prophet of the older dispensations had ever done, and then utilized the revelation in every available way as a deterrent from evil and a stimulant to goodness. No teacher ever set forth as he did the vital, inevitable, solemn relationship between the deeds of the present life and the fruitage of the eternal state. No teacher ever so cheered those who sought to obey the divine law, with sublime disclosures of that holy Hill where the men of clean hands and pure hearts on earth are finally to be congregated in everlasting purity and in a blessedness which nothing but such purity can ever attain. Nor did any other teacher ever set forth with such honesty and tenderness and such convincing power the fact, the certainty and the awfulness of hell as the ultimate estate of all those whom the law in its majesty and he himself as judge must finally condemn for their disobedience. And it is in full harmony with his teaching that

the Larger Catechism declares (152) that every sin, even the least, being committed against the sovereignty, goodness and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, *deserveth his wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come.*

11. Law of God and human morality.

Two topics remain to be considered in order to complete the study of this suggestive and fruitful chapter. The first of these is concerned with the relationship, by both affiliation and contrast, between the moral law thus interpreted as the supreme rule of life, and all human morality—the justitia civilis or justitia externa, so often mentioned in the symbolism and the theology of early Protestantism. It was natural that the Reformers, in their strenuous condemnation of those who in the phrase of Paul were going about to establish their own righteousness, should sometimes fail to note the true worth of native morality as seen among men, and should become too severe and sweeping in their censure of all endeavor to live uprightly on the platform of natural equity merely. It is to be confessed that in more recent times there has been too much inconsiderate and injurious animadversion in the Protestant pulpit upon moralists as a class, on the assumption that all systems of morals discernible by the light of nature or through the teachings of providence, are not only insufficient to secure salvation, but are intrinsically and radically unworthy. But it ought never to be forgotten that there are many vital points of affiliation between all such systems and the supreme morality inculcated in holy Scripture,—that the relationship is not altogether one of contrast and antagonism, but rather that all true morality of whatever grade or type rests in large degree on one and the same basis, and is entitled so far forth to just appreciation by Christian minds. As our Lord beholding the young ruler loved him, even while exposing the ethical deficiency in his outwardly blamless life, so we may well recognize the fact that many who have not entered upon the true life of obedience to the law of God, as set forth in his Word, may still perform acts which are equitable and charitable, good in their outward effect and in a certain measure good in the spirit that prompts them, though such acts may not render the actor worthy of pardon or acceptance with God. Whatever deeds are prompted by right reason, whatever action springs from the conviction and impulsion of conscience, whatever in conduct has its basis in sound ethical principle as distinguished from immoral selfishness, whatever contributes in this way to the moral order and

true well-being of society, has a valid claim on the recognition and respect of the Christian Church,—so long at least as this does not lead to any ignoring of the doctrine of the pravity and disability of man, or that of the need of genuine faith in Christ and true repose in his mediation as the only ground of salvation. The Confession of Augsburg, while denouncing as profane the dream that Christian righteousness is naught else but a civil and philosophic righteousness, still recognizes the fact that the will of unregenerate man hath liberty to work a civil righteousness, and to choose such things as reason can reach unto. And the Form. of Concord admits that men not regenerate do render to the law a certain manner and degree of the obedience required by it,—though it adds, that they do this as by constraint and unwillingly because they are carnal.

But while this view should justly be held, it may also with equal justice be claimed that there are several particulars in which the morality enjoined in Scripture, especially in the New Testament—the new obedience, as it was happily termed in several Protestant creeds—is superior not only to the best and purest living of unrenewed men, but to the noblest systems of morals ever framed by the natural reason. First of all: in its origin and source. All natural morality, even in its loftiest forms, originates in and with man himself. It comes to him partly through the action of the natural reason and conscience; it flows partly from the recognized agreements of reason and conscience in society or in the race; it springs in part from the worthiest philosophies. But its source is always human and human only; it never rises higher than humanity. Biblical morality is truly supernatural in origin as well as in content. The principles that regulate it, the motives that rule in it, the spirit that animates it, are all higher than man. It is not a discovery but a revelation. Its real author is God: its primal source is in his perfect and holy nature: its certification is seen in his august signature, and its authority flows directly as a river of life from his throne.

Secondly: in the quality and range of its requirements. Natural morality is chiefly relative and external in its demands: it concerns itself mainly with outward conduct, and with the relationships of men, organic or specific. in practical life. It has indeed an interior hemisphere of motive and principle, more or less recognizable, but its developments are limited chiefly to the outward—the visible in action. The morality of Scripture, as we have already had occasion to note, concerns itself primarily with what is inward,—with purposes, motives, feelings, volitions; in a

word, with character. It thus has an incomparably broader range of development and influence. Both in the number and scope of the duties it imposes, and in the generic conception of duty as the dominating principle in all worthy manhood, it rises immeasurably above the loftiest morality ever realized through natural powers or even conceived by the natural man.

Thirdly: in the kind and measure of authority employed. The weakness of all natural systems of morals lies not merely in the narrowness of their range, but also in the measure of imperativeness with which their claims are enforced. They may summon to their aid the calm command of the reason, the urgent pleading of conscience, the moral bearings of the act proposed, the voice and judgment of human society, and beyond all this the universal and indestructible mandate of the right and the wrong as necessary and eternal elements of action. It may go farther than this and invoke in behalf of its requisitions the influence of a personal Deity to whom the soul is amenable, so far as such a Deity is revealed in nature or in the human reason. But there it must pause, though the will should remain obdurate against its commands, and the man refuses to yield it due obedience: in this emergency it can neither prevent the evil it condemns nor promote the good it desires, whatever may be the consequences. Biblical morality introduces another series of influences, higher in kind and more potential in effect. It reveals the Deity of nature in more distinct and impressive forms as the Creator, the moral Governor, the final Judge of all mankind. It reveals this Deity in Christ as a perfect example of a purely ethical life, and as showing his obedience to the moral law even in the mystery of the cross. It reveals this Deity also in the Holy Spirit whose office it is to disclose the law in higher and broader forms, to commend it to the heart, and by many gracious ministries to encourage and enable the soul to obey its requisitions. It also presents a vast series of promises, invitations, precepts, warnings, drawn not only from the present life but also from that eternity of which the moral aspirations in man, even in his degenerate estate, are a constant foretokening and witness. In a word, it concentrates upon the whole sphere of human obligation the complete force of the divine personality and the divine relations—the force of truth, of duty and of eternity, and thus transcends immeasurably in its incitements to obedience all the incentives which the morality of nature in its noblest forms can bring to bear upon the soul.

It follows of necessity that biblical morality can and does develop a higher ethical capability and experience in man,—lifts

him upward into a grander ethical life in both purpose and action, than is in fact attainable through the ministries of the purest natural systems of morality. The best moralist, in a word, is made a better man ethically by becoming a Christian, and surrendering his life freely to that supernatural guidance and control which Christianity supplies. He thus obtains broader and deeper conceptions of what morality is and demands, receives into his nature more vigorous and effective impulses toward obedience, attains a stricter discipline of self and a loftier type of purpose and of action, and by such processes grows by degrees into a completer manhood than would otherwise be possible. Admitting into his soul all those finer and more spiritual influences that flow off from the divine law and the divine grace, he finds his whole being electrified and energized. He is brought into conscious fellowship with all that is true and beautiful and good. God, in a word, now rules and reigns in his moral life, and the presence and sway of God in and through his holy law and grace makes that life incomparably pure, incomparably sublime and blessed.

12. Law and Grace: faith and obedience.

The other topic remaining to be considered is the relationship between law and grace,—the relation between this divinely revealed and divinely energized morality and the salvation that comes into the soul of man in and through resting in Jesus Christ, and his gracious mediation. As we have seen, once and again, it was the peculiar glory of the Reformers and of the Protestant churches universally, that they exalted faith, simple trust in the promises of God in Christ and simple commitment of the soul in penitence and love to the Redeemer, to be by him cleansed from sin and freed from guilt, as the basal principle in the Christian religion—the one essential act on the part of man, on which the character and the destinies of the soul were to turn forevermore. The sum of the Gospel, said Zwingli in his opening Articles, is that Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, has made known to us the will of the heavenly Father, and by his innocence has redeemed us from everlasting death and reconciled us to God; and this Christ therefore is the sole and only way of salvation to all who ever have been, who now are, or who ever shall be. Fides sola justificat, was the motto which all alike, Lutheran and Reformed, were agreed in inscribing on their sanctuaries, proclaiming in their pulpits, and recording as the central and saving truth in their various formularies. And it was this cardinal doctrine which not only enabled Protestantism at the first to make such marvelous headway against the casuistries and the schemings

and the denunciations of Rome, but from the sixteenth century until now has been the center and core of its teaching, and the chief secret of its quickening and saving power over men.

It is not strange that, under the influence of such strong convictions as to the prime value of faith, Luther should have pronounced the terse and practical letter of James an epistle of straw, unworthy of a place in the Canon, both because it contained, as he viewed it, no doctrine of justification through faith, and because it seemed to him to inculcate a doctrine of salvation through works which was, as he regarded it, essentially at variance with the general teaching of the New Testament. Nor is it strange that in some minds and at some junctures in the convulsions and struggles of the period, the gospel of works as enunciated by James should have failed to receive due recognition, or that a pernicious antinomianism should have sprung up here and there, ignoring the authoritative precepts of the law, and in the supposed interest of grace even declaring the Ten Commandments inoperative and void. This erratic and injurious tendency has sometimes made its appearance in later ages, and where more considerate adjustment and harmonizing of the kindred doctrines involved might have been expected. Yet it is noticeable that even in the earlier periods of the Reformation a more considerate view had currency. The Augsburg Confession itself had an Article (VI) on what was called the New Obedience, affirming that faith ought always to bring forth good fruits, and that men, and especially Christian men, ought to do the good works commanded of God; and a similar Article (IV) appears in the Formula of Concord, expressly intended to quiet the controversies on this subject which nascent antinomianism had introduced into the German churches. The Tetrapolitan Conf. contains an entire chapter entitled the Duties of a Christian Man, in which the relations between faith and duty, and the indispensableness of duty as an index and measure of faith, are happily defined. The Reformed symbolism reveals in various instances the same significant fact. The whole may be summed up in the affirmation of the Thirty-Nine Articles (XII), that although good works, in the form of obedience to the divine law, cannot put away sin or deliver from the severities of the divine judgment since they are always imperfect, yet such works are pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, because they spring necessarily out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them such faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit: see Hall, Harmony of the Prot. Confessions: Ninth Section.

The key and explanation of the whole is found in the recogni-

tion, according to this happily worded Article, of the fact that justifying or saving faith is essentially an active as well as a passive principle—an active power within the soul, subduing all other thoughts and impulses unto itself, determining all actions according to its own regulative sway, and evermore inciting to and inducing the performance of every recognized duty. As the Sum of Saving Knowledge tersely states it, the obedience of the law must flow from love, and love from a pure heart, and a pure heart from a good conscience, and a good conscience from faith unfeigned. Evangelical faith and evangelical obedience, grateful acceptance of the grace of God and loving conformity in heart and life to the law of God, are thus in no sense antagonistic, but are alike essential and indissoluble elements in the one and sole salvation through the one and only Mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus. There is no inconsistency or lack of harmony in the New Testament at this vital point. The works which James commends are such as no power within the soul but faith can produce, and the faith which Paul commends is such a power, producing by virtue of its own nature such obedience and such works as God requires in his perfect law.

In concluding these studies, we may fitly derive from them a new sense of the nature and scope, of the comprehensiveness and cogency, of the majesty and glory of the Divine Law, instituted at the creation of man, formulated at Sinai, inculcated in Hebraism, expanded by Christ and his apostles, and forever exalted before the eyes of men as the supreme moral code and the regulative rule of human life in all lands and times. We may well say with the venerable Hooker: Law hath her seat in the bosom of God; not in the narrow reason or the fallible conscience of man, neither in the dictates of human experience or the deductions of abstract philosophy, nor even in the divine will viewed merely as the source of supreme and resistless power, but in the bosom of God,—in that holy and tender and righteous nature where all perfection dwells forever, and whence all good proceeds to all the universe of being. And well has he also said, that her voice is the harmony of that universe, and that all created things, the smallest and the greatest alike, should do her homage, as the mother of their peace and joy.

LECTURE ELEVENTH—CIVIL RELATIONS AND DUTIES.

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY—LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE: CIVIL MAGISTRACY: PAPAL SUPREMACY: LAWFUL OATHS: VOWS: MARRIAGE—POLYGAMY—CELIBACY: DIVORCE: CHRISTIANITY IN CIVIL AFFAIRS.

C. F. XX–XXIV. L. C. 105–8; 113; 127–130, 139. AMER. FORM OF GOV. CH. I. DIRECTORY FOR WORSHIP, CH. XII.

It is difficult to describe under one general title the group of chapters in the Confession, five in number, which stand between the comprehensive and magnificent chapter on the Law of God and those which describe the Christian Church with its sacraments, institutes and authority. Some of the subjects introduced in this group hardly seem to be congruous with the prime purpose of a confession of faith in the essential verities of religion: others, in the changes which time and circumstances have wrought, appear to us like anachronisms that might well enough be eliminated. None of them, excepting those that occur in the chapter on Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day, make their appearance in the Shorter, and few, and these but incidentally, in the Larger Catechism. At first view, consequently, these chapters with their peculiar contents fail, with the exception just noted, to interest us. Nor is it until they are thoughtfully examined under the light of the historic period during which they were framed and wrought into the Confession, that they shine out in their true and large significance. In general, it may be said that they contemplate the Christian man as standing within the State, and as sustaining civil relations and under obligation to discharge certain civil functions and duties. Though living under the Law of God primarily and amenable supremely to its behests, he is regarded as under human law, and as accountable not merely to God but also to the State and to society for the manner in which he meets the specific requisitions thus imposed. Such earthly citizenship was regarded justly by the Assembly as a matter of religious as well as civil obligation, and therefore as worthy of recognition and enforcement in a Christian creed.

It is noticeable that many of the Protestant symbols discuss,

some of them at considerable length, the topics presented in these chapters: see Hall, Harmony of Protestant Confessions. To comprehend this more general fact rightly, we must turn to the illuminating history of the Reformation in both its earliest and its later periods. It is indispensable that we should know well the civil side of that great movement, including the political relations of both Romanism and Protestantism in the various countries of Europe, the formation of provincial and state churches, the rise of erratic tendencies both religious and political such as Anabaptism, the conflicts around the complicated issue of civil jurisdiction in religious affairs. Only the light shed by due comprehension of these civil movements and events will adequately solve the problem which the presence of such topics in the Protestant creeds presents. Especially is it important to this end, so far as the Westminster formularies are concerned, that we should be familiar with the political history of Great Britain, with the issues civil and religious between England and Scotland, with the desperate strifes between Parliament and the crown, with the prolonged struggle to establish, first Catholicism, then Prelacy, and finally Presbyterianism, as the national Church, and with the long and painful efforts of various parties to secure religious liberty and toleration. To those who have studied that history with care, and reflected upon the diversified causes at work and the profound principles involved in it, many of the truths and duties set forth in this cluster of chapters assume a distinctness of meaning, a peculiar glow and coloring, which are not discernible to the ordinary reader. In the light shed by such knowledge let us enter on their examination.

The double heading in the twentieth chapter, *Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience* suggests at once the practical distinction between freedom as toward God and freedom as related to man. The two conceptions are separable in thought, and may well be considered apart and successively. The Christian liberty here affirmed is doubtless that deliverance from the law regarded as a final test of desert before God, of which Paul speaks so earnestly in his instructive and tender letter to the Galatian church. The first section of the chapter defines this liberty in detail as *purchased for believers* through the mediation of Christ, and as consisting of a large number of particulars herein named;—deliverance, not from the obligation to obey the moral law, since the claim of that law remains in unabated force under the Gospel, but from

1. Christian Liberty: freedom as toward God, its nature and extent.

the guilt of sin and the curse pronounced by the law on all willful transgression ;—deliverance also from the natural bondage of the soul under indwelling sin, under the sway of Satan, and under the domination of this present evil world ;—deliverance furthermore, from the sting of death, the victory of the grave, the final damnation which a career of sinfulness involves. These are the more negative aspects of the Christian liberty here described : its more positive aspects appear in the chapters on Justification and Adoption, and those which immediately follow. It was originally proposed in the Assembly (Minutes : 211) to make a direct reference to these chapters, as a part of this definition, but the reference was finally omitted—probably on the ground that it was deemed to be needless. This liberty is here tersely defined as *free access to God* as his sanctified children, and happy obedience to him with a willing mind and out of love such as prompts a filial child to regard the wishes of its parents. There is submission, but it is the submission of love ; there is faithful obedience, but it is the obedience of affection, pure, sacred, perpetual. It is therefore in no sense a state of bondage, though it be marked by submission and obedience : it is rather a state of liberty like that which angels enjoy, sweet and satisfying and complete.

The same section indicates in brief terms the contrast between the measure of such liberty granted to believers during the earlier dispensations, and that granted to Christians under the new economy of the Gospel. The Jewish church, it is said, was under the yoke of the ceremonial law, from which the Christian is made free. The Jewish church was under the yoke of the moral law also, in a sense and manner which is not true of the Christian, and its access to God through the Mosaic forms of worship was less direct and less inspiring. The difference had already been suggested in the chapter on the Covenant with Man, wherein it is taught that the covenant was differently administered in the time of the law and the time of the gospel,—in the first instance by promises, prophecies, sacrifices and other types and ordinances, designed to point the devout Hebrew forward to the era when full remission of sins and full deliverance should be secured through the Messiah,—in the second instance by the historic manifestation of such remission and deliverance in Christ who came as he himself taught, to make his people free indeed. Hence it is said in this section that Christians have greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and enjoy *fuller communications of the free Spirit of God than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.* The contrast is both marked and

suggestive: it gives us a grand conception of that holy and happy liberty wherewith our Lord makes his disciples free.

The third section introduces an important caution at this point, directed doubtless against those who were inclined to turn this holy liberty into license, on the hypothesis that believers are not in any sense under law because they as believers are under an economy of grace. They who under any pretence of liberty—it is said—*do practise any sin or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty*, which is holiness and righteousness before God. As the Savoy Declaration states it, they do thereby pervert the main design of the grace of the Gospel to their own destruction. As the chief end of every man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, this must preëminently be the chief end of the Christian, and the indulgence of any lust or the practising of any sin must be intrinsically and absolutely incongruous with such a supreme purpose. Similar cautions against wicked license under the name of Christian liberty are found in other Protestant creeds, and the sad history of some among the minor sects and parties claiming the Protestant name, painfully illustrates the peril to which all such license leads. The Formula of Concord (XII) specifically condemns the errors of the Anabaptists on the ground that they involve such perversion of the true biblical doctrine of liberty. So also the Belgic Confession (XXXVII), declares that the Anabaptists by their false views of liberty confound that decency and good order which God hath established among men.

One hardly knows which to admire most in Calvin, the spaciousness of his conceptions or the penetrative thoroughness which marks his discussions. His presentation of the doctrine of Christian liberty as toward both God and man (Inst. B. III: 19) is a striking illustration of both qualities. It was undoubtedly in large degree the source from which the present chapter was derived. He defines Christian liberty as being, first, an elevation of the believer above the range of law and its retributive claims; secondly, a spirit of voluntary and joyous obedience to the divine will through the impulsion of faith; thirdly, deliverance from obligation as to things which are external or of indifferent moral quality. He pronounces Christian liberty in all its branches as thus defined, a spiritual grace or endowment; and then earnestly warns believers against any perversion of it through personal indulgence or by disregard of the consciences and claims of Christian brethren. Yet with characteristic skill he draws clear and strict lines of responsibility at the point where such

liberty might change into culpable neglect of the rights or the authority of God as supreme. We must at all times study charity, he says, and keep in view the edification of our neighbor; but on the other hand we must not offend God for the love of our neighbor. In the same chapter Calvin discusses also liberty of conscience as toward men and society, asserting that there are two kinds of government in the world; the one spiritual, by which the conscience is formed to piety and the divine service; the other political, by which a man is instructed in the duties of humanity and civility which are to be observed in intercourse with mankind.

2. Liberty of Conscience: freedom as toward men.

In the second and fourth sections of this chapter we find a corresponding discussion of *Liberty of Conscience*—that kind and measure of moral freedom which the Christian may properly claim and exercise in all matters of belief and duty, so far as his fellow men are concerned. The Reformation has been described as a revolution in the interest of liberty,—of liberty on one side to inquire and investigate freely without regard to the restrictions of ecclesiastical authority, and on the other side to hold and advocate whatever truths within the religious sphere are conscientiously believed by the individual man, although such authority might assume to prohibit or enjoin. The Theses of Luther and the Articles of Ulrich Zwingli are ringing proofs that the Reformers from the beginning realized the fact that such liberty was the grand underlying and indispensable condition of the spiritual movement they were instituting. While justification by faith was their essential principle, the right to interpret the Scriptures and to hold whatever the Scriptures clearly taught, without the fear or the favor of man, was the formal principle—as it has often been termed—on which their entire revolution rested. Hence came the protests which appeared so often and sounded out so clearly in their creeds against all papal restriction, against churchly dictation, against ancient tradition and ecclesiastical law, and civil law also, in whatever repressive forms. Liberty was their watchword through all the conflicts and trials to which they were subjected—liberty of thought, liberty of conscience, and liberty of speech and testimony also. And nowhere did this characteristic principle find firmer advocacy than in Scotland and England from the days of Henry VIII. down to the era when the Westminster Assembly was convened. One interesting illustration of the early development of this principle in Britain appears in the bold utterance of Bishop Hooper—an utterance

made doubly significant and pathetic by his martyrdom at the stake under Mary, in 1555, for his loyalty to liberty of conscience: As touching the superior powers of the earth, it is well known to all that have readen and marked the Scripture, that it appertaineth nothing unto their office to make any law to govern the conscience of their subjects in religion.

But certainly no stronger or nobler declaration in the interest of such liberty appeared anywhere than we read in the statement found in the second section of this chapter: *God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith or worship.* There is in the words an impressive blending of conscious responsibility on the one side and resolute loyalty to freedom on the other. For the Christian freeman is not wholly and absolutely free in thought or creed. God and his Word are the final tests of religious belief, and no opinion or judgment in any matter pertaining to saving faith or to salvation may be held by the believer, which is not conformable to this supreme standard. The narrownesses of the reason and the fallibilities of the conscience are to be corrected and completed from this divine source, and from this only. In the strong phrase of Paul, every thought, every opinion, every judgment in the religious sphere is to be brought into willing, entire captivity to the obedience of Christ. What saith the Scripture, was the fundamental question—as Protestantism held—by which the doctrines and commandments of the papacy were to be measured: the appeal to the Bible was ever the final appeal. And the Reformers universally recognized the authoritativeness of this rule in the discussion of the differences which from time to time arose among themselves also, as well as in regard to the more radical differences which separated them from Rome. In the same way they tested the Socinian and other heresies which crept in upon them at various points under cover of the Protestant name, and were corrupting the beliefs and practices of some among the faithful. The Westminster divines therefore followed the universal doctrine of Protestantism antecedent to their day, in affirming that God is the sole Lord of the conscience, and that his Word is the unerring standard of belief and practice for the Christian,—whatever is contrary to that Word or is beside it or beyond it in whatever direction, being in no sense obligatory upon him as a disciple.

The section also warns against the sin of professing to accept any human dogmas or obey any human commandments, when the reason and the conscience, properly enlightened by Scripture,

are in protest against them. Doubtless the main reference here was to those who as a matter of policy professed to accept the teachings and commands of the papacy; but the principle laid down is universal. To avow or support a belief which we do not truly hold, or to give credence to what we do not perceive on reasonable grounds to be true, even in submission to the behests of the organized church, is justly said *to betray true liberty of conscience*; and such betrayal, it is implied, is a sin not only against the truth, but against him who is the supreme Lord of the conscience. On the other hand, to require implicit or unreasoning faith as Romanism did,—to demand blind obedience on any pretext of human right to control belief, is said to destroy liberty of conscience, *and reason also*. In other words, it is as sinful to require such obedience as it is to yield it, and the authority ecclesiastical or otherwise which makes such a requisition is guilty of invading that holy freedom which God has given to every Christian as a part of his spiritual birthright. We shall have occasion to recall this broad statement when we come to consider, under the general doctrine of the Church, the authority which may be granted (XXXI) to Synods and Councils *for her better government and further edification*, and also the limitations which may properly be imposed upon all such ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

In the final section of the chapter, we are confronted by the serious problem with which the Protestant communions, both Lutheran and Reformed, everywhere had to deal during the progress of the Reformation—the problem of the relationship subsisting between the Church and the State, and specially of the rights and responsibilities of the State within the ecclesiastical sphere. As the various questions involved in this problem will come up more fully in the explication of the chapter (XXIII) which treats *Of the Civil Magistrate*, we may note here only so much as presents itself in a preliminary form. That the State is ordained of God as a permanent institution,—that as such it has legitimate powers which may be exercised in a lawful way, and that the doctrine of Christian liberty or liberty of conscience warrants no believer in opposing or warring against the State in the rightful exercise of such powers, is here directly affirmed. It is implied also that it is the duty of the Christian freeman as well as of the Church always to uphold civil government in the use of all its legitimate functions, even though its administration may be marked by many imperfections. But the section further declares that the civil magistrate on his part ought in the interest of the Church

and of religion to take authoritative action against whatever is inimical to the true faith,—such as the publishing of opinions or indulgence in practices which are contrary to the light of nature or to the known principles of Christianity. The description of such possible offences is very broad, including faith and worship and conversation, and whatever else may be deemed *destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in his Church.* It is implied that the declarative authority and censures of the Church are not sufficient to crush out such hostile influences, and therefore that the State in its organic capacity ought to take action authoritatively against them. As it appears in the original record, such delinquents may be lawfully called to account and proceeded against by the power of the civil magistrate.

It should be said that the teaching of this section, and the still more sweeping doctrine of the chapter on the Civil Magistrate, were not accepted with unanimity in the Assembly. The Minutes (297, *seq.*) show that there were members who believed that the civil proceeding here described was in whatever form of it contrary, if not to any direct word of Scripture, still to the nature and genius of Christianity as the religion of Him who solemnly declared that his kingdom was not of this world in either spirit or method. The discussion on the subject was continued for several days, and at its close at least four prominent members formally recorded their dissent from the view adopted. Still the statement as it stands undoubtedly represents the judgment of a large majority of the body. The seriousness of the error into which the Assembly thus fell, will become apparent as we shall come to examine the doctrine of the civil magistracy more in detail. Mitchell (Introduction) while admitting that the language used in this section is capable of a harsh construction, and that it was so construed by stricter English and Scotch Covenanters, claims that the words do not necessarily require such a construction, and were not so interpreted by all who assented to their admission into the creed. It is a fact to be noted here that American Presbyterianism, in its first General Assembly in 1788, in connection with the revision and formal adoption of the Confession, struck out entirely the last clause of this section, *by the power of the civil magistrate*,—thus rejecting altogether the opinion that the State may be invoked to protect and assist the Church in its resistance to any heresy or to any irreligious practice which may claim protection under the broad ægis of liberty of conscience.

That there was serious inconsistency between the exalted doctrine of liberty stated in the opening and the practical rule laid

down in the closing section of this chapter, will be apparent to the unprejudiced student. That a still more serious inconsistency developed itself in the acts of the Assembly, and in its general disposition toward the repression of such religious opinions as were at variance with its teaching, is known to all who are familiar with the current history. In extenuation of this inconsistency two general facts should be considerately borne in mind. The first of these is the fact of the creation and existence of a series of provincial or state churches wherever Protestantism extended itself—churches established by civil enactment and largely dependent on the civil power for support and protection, and therefore of necessity in greater or less degree under civil influence and jurisdiction. It was universally believed by the Reformers that such an adjustment was indispensable to protect the holy cause they had espoused from the aggressions of Rome, backed by the armies of papal states on the one side, and from the disintegrating effects of heresy in various forms on the other. It was therefore judged, almost without question, that there should be such an organized Protestant church in each city or province or country, supported by the particular political power within whose domain it was planted, and that there should be but one such church—all other religious organizations being undesirable and in a sense illicit. Presbyterianism thus became the established church in Scotland, and Episcopacy supplanted Romanism in England and Ireland, until the brief and sad hour when Presbyterianism aspired to be and became the one authorized and politically endorsed church of the three realms. And so it came to pass that the Assembly of Westminster was, as we have seen, a body created by Parliament, its members designated, its pecuniary support provided for, its rules of procedure prescribed, and its commission defined by the civil power creating it. So it came to pass that the Confession of Faith and other formularies were submitted to Parliament as being simply the humble advice of the Assembly, wholly without warrant or authority until they should be considered and approved by the civil tribunal. That the temper and acts of the Assembly should have been largely influenced, so far as liberty of conscience and religious toleration were concerned, by such an anomalous and pernicious situation will be easily perceived.

3. Failure to carry out the doctrine: inconsistencies noted.

The second fact to be noted is the very imperfect development of the spirit of toleration, either on the Continent or in the British Isles. The intolerance of Rome, which had shown itself

in persecutions and anathemas, in assaults on individual and national rights, in the burning of Huss and Savonarola, and in other equally malevolent forms, passed over somewhat into Protestantism generally, and in some degree infected alike its teachings and its acts. Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox, were each and all dogmatic men :—dogmatic not only toward convicted heretics but even at times in their temper toward each other. Luther, disputing violently over the Hoc est Corpus meum of Matthew, and soundly asserting that those who disagreed with him in interpretation must be guided by some other Holy Ghost than his, is a typical example. The burning of Servetus was another, and the list of persecutions and banishments, and even of martyrdoms at the instigation of Protestant parties or leaders might be indefinitely multiplied. The greatest blemish in the Institutes of Calvin—the defect that from the first impaired and still impairs largely its influence as a superb compendium of Christian doctrine—is its hot temper of antagonism, its bitter invective, its intolerant treatment and characterization of contrary opinions. Nor did this spirit die out appreciably during the latter half of the sixteenth century : it showed itself in the Synod of Dort and in the doctrinal conflicts in England and Scotland as well as Holland during the earlier decades of the seventeenth century also. The Peace of Augsburg, 1555, whose binding force extended even to the Peace of Westphalia, 1648, guaranteed to Protestants in Germany freedom of religious worship only upon the condition of subscription to the Augsburg Confession. It is not strange therefore that the Westminster Assembly, unhappily conditioned as it was, should have fallen into the general error of the times—should have manifested in some instances a spirit and sometimes taken action quite at variance with its own grand declaration that God alone is Lord of the conscience, and his Word the only authoritative guide in belief and duty. The special fact also, that the Assembly was expressly instructed by Parliament to do what it could toward vindicating and clearing the doctrines of the Church from all false calumnies and aspersions and misconstructions, as well as to formulate the received truth ; and the further fact that Parliament itself sometimes set the example of intolerance, and even sought to use the Assembly as an agent in repressing heresies, must be considerately weighed in our judgment of its action.

Bearing these two facts in mind, we may with more of sympathetic indulgence note some of the judicial proceedings of the Assembly, which in the clearer light of a better age seem to call for disapproval, and even for open condemnation. The Minutes

contain the record of various acts of this class: two noted instances will suffice. One Paul Best had written a book on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, in which he had maintained, inter alia, that the godhead of the Son is not eternal in the same sense and measure as the godhead of the Father. After examination the teaching of the book was condemned by the Assembly, and its author was formally arraigned in consequence at the bar of the House of Commons. The book also was presented before that tribunal; what were termed its horrid blasphemies were exposed; and the author was cast into the Gatehouse prison, Westminster. The records of the Commons show that the Prolocutor of the Assembly and the two assessors appeared before the House, described these blasphemies, and in behalf of the Assembly petitioned that Parliament would use its authority to execute condign punishment upon an offender of such a type, in order that the world might know how much it detested such prodigious heresies. The House thanked the Assembly for its care and desire of suppressing these erroneous opinions, and declared its purpose to inflict severe punishment on all persons holding forth such horrid blasphemies. Committees of Parliament and also of the Assembly were subsequently sent to Best to convince him of his error, but without success. While still in prison he wrote another pamphlet in defense of his views, entitled Mysteries Discovered, or a Mercurial Picture pointing out the Way from Babylon to the Holy City. This pamphlet was ordered by act of Parliament, the Assembly doubtless concurring, to be burned by the common hangman. Best was released in 1647, and died in retirement in 1657: Minutes, 102, 214–215.

Another instance equally significant appears in the case of a book said to advocate the heretical opinion that God is the author of sin. The writer of the treatise, John Archer, who is described as a man of good estimation for learning and piety, was already dead. The Assembly, however, complained of the treatise before Parliament and desired its suppression, together with the arraignment of the printer and the burning of all copies that could be found. Parliament concurred in the damning of the book, and ordered it burned by the public hangman at five places in London, Westminster being one of them,—the sheriffs of the city superintending the combustion, in the presence of the Assembly. Parliament also requested the Assembly to declare its detestation of the heresy, and such a declaration was at once drafted and sent to the House with a request that it be printed, and be made known by some public officer at the time of the burning of the

book. There is an added record, which seems to have been partially erased, in the form of a humble desire that the House would excuse the Assembly from being present at the time of the burning: but subsequently twenty members were appointed for this service, four at each of the five places where the book was to be burned,—the number being finally reduced to five: Minutes, 112–3:115. Presbyt. Review, April 1885.

Yet, notwithstanding such instances, we may still affirm that the Assembly were in fact moderate in their proceedings against heresy, as compared with their predecessors, either British or Continental. They had the strongest practical reasons for such moderation, since such a temper and purpose on their part were the condition sine qua non to their success in carrying out their grand ecclesiastical scheme. But the sad fact is that they had not yet attained to such a measure of toleration in act as they had themselves enunciated in theory. Gillespie declared in the Assembly, during the discussion on a letter to be sent to the General Assembly of Scotland, that he regarded it as one of the greatest mercies he had ever received in this world, to have religious liberty—liberty of opinion and liberty of speech, such as he had enjoyed during the sessions of the Assembly. But what he desired, as he said, was not so much toleration, or forbearance toward erroneous opinion, as mutual endeavor for a happy accommodation among those who were conscious of some differences in judgment, but conscious also of unity in belief and in ecclesiastical interests. Neither that eminent leader nor any other was prepared to tolerate heresy as we now endure it, or to consent even to the existence and circulation of erroneous opinions, as we now consent. Their mind and feeling were in what may be deemed a transitional frame,—an advance on what had gone before, but an imperfect realization of what in Great Britain and everywhere was sure to follow in time, as a corollary from the fundamental principle of Protestantism. In a word, they failed to apprehend adequately the aphorism of Macaulay that the only remedy for the evils of liberty is liberty: they accepted the principle of toleration, but were unable to apply the principle thoroughly in the presence of so much that seemed to need firm and stern repression. One suggestive illustration of their general position appears in the repressive order passed by the Assembly at the time of the Best agitation: The liberty of all opinions and religions under the pretense of liberty of conscience, maintained in books and otherwise lately published, may be speedily suppressed. But Mitchell in his admirable Introduction

to the Minutes (70–74) has shown how truly tolerant some of the members of the Assembly were, and has justly said respecting the Assembly generally that it will ever remain as its unquestioned honor that it first reclaimed for liberty a large province in which the civil and ecclesiastical authorities had previously claimed absolute and arbitrary sway. It is certainly true that at least within the church, and to a large extent outside of the church, they granted more,—as he claims—than had ever been granted in England before. Milton indeed in his Areopagitica denies them this credit, and in eloquent terms charges them with tyranny over the thoughts and beliefs of men; declaring that though they had renounced the pope, they yet hugged the popedom, and shared the authority among themselves. Baxter, while admitting that the Westminster divines were for the most part men of eminent learning, godliness, ministerial abilities and fidelity, agrees in part with Milton, in saying that the more rigid of them drew too near the way of prelacy, by grasping at a kind of secular power; not using it themselves, but binding the magistrate to confiscate or imprison men because they were excommunicate, and so corrupting the true discipline of the church, and turning the communion of saints into the communion of the multitude. Yet the careful student of contemporaneous history, after duly estimating the critical conditions amid which the Assembly did its noble work, and fairly examining all that the body said and determined in the interest of Christian catholicity, will not consent to accept as just the bitter line of Milton:

> New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large.

4. The Civil Magistrate: sphere and functions: State and Church.

Chapter XXI. in the Confession, which treats of *Religious Worship and the Sabbath*, was undoubtedly introduced into the Confession at this point under the conviction that these two topics might be regarded properly as subjects for civil as well as ecclesiastical legislation. Enough has been said already, in the consideration of the chapter on the Law of God, respecting the Sabbath, its triple institution, its universal character, its change of date, and its right to the observance of all men and to protection by the State. The subject of Worship, especially the nature and scope of public worship and the use of prescribed liturgies in such worship, can best be considered under the general doctrine of the Church, since according to more recent Presbyterian opinion it belongs to the church rather than the civil power to give instruction authoritatively respecting

the manner of glorifying God in the services of the sanctuary. Postponing also the specific matter of *Lawful Oaths and Vows* (XXII) which may best be considered later on, we may now proceed to examine the important chapter (XXIII) which treats *Of the Civil Magistrate.* For reasons already stated, the topic found a place in many of the earlier creeds, though in none of them is the subject so carefully and discriminatingly presented. No less than ten of the sixty-seven Articles of Zwingli treat in his brief and positive way of the Magistratus Publicus, as established by the words and acts of Christ, as endowed with a legitimate authority under Christ, and as entitled within his own proper sphere to the allegiance and obedience of all Christian men. The Augsburg Confession speaks (XVI) in a general way of civil affairs, and specially of the duty of obeying all who hold civil authority, save only when they command any sin: and the Formula of Concord (XII) contains a specialized condemnation of Anabaptist errors on this subject. The French Confession closes with two Articles in which the legitimacy of civil authorities as the lieutenants and officers of God is maintained, and the corresponding duties of obeying and paying taxes and bearing the yoke of subjection with a good and free will are enjoined. The First and Second Helvetic Conf. have articles (XXVII and XXX) and the Belgic also (XXXVI) De Magistratu,—the two latter discussing the matter at considerable length. Mitchell suggests that a close resemblance is traceable between the Belgic and the Westminster statement, and thinks it suggestive that the Westminster divines should be found turning to Holland for that doctrine on this subject which, from its history and its conflicts, Holland among all Protestant countries was best fitted to teach.

But the clearest historic light upon the Westminster doctrine will be found in the study of antecedent British symbols,—the Scotch Confession and the Thirty-Nine and the Irish Articles. The first of these formularies not only affirmed (XXIV) that all empires, kingdoms, dominions and cities are destinated and ordained of God,—that the authority vested in these is given for the glory of God and the singular profit and commodity of mankind,—and that those wielding such authority, being lieutenants of God, are to be loved, honored, feared, and held in most reverent estimation; but also declared that their power is given chiefly and most principally for the conservation and purgation of religion, and for the suppression of idolatry and all superstition whatsoever,—and that those who resist them or who refuse to aid them in the discharge of such duty to religion are guilty of neglecting

or resisting the very ordinance of God. The Introduction to the Edwardine Articles, 1562, declared the king to be by the ordinance of God Defender of the Faith and supreme Governor of the Church within his dominions,—as such empowered by virtue of the kingly office to conserve and maintain the Church in the unity of true religion and in the bond of peace. The Anglican Articles (XXXVII) while denying to civil rulers the right to minister in the pulpit or dispense the sacraments, gave them authority to rule in matters ecclesiastical as well as civil, and practically made them as supreme within the church as within the state. It should be said, just here, that American Episcopacy in the revision of 1801, while counselling respectful obedience to all regular and legitimate civil authority, directly set aside the older dogma, and affirmed that the state hath no authority in things purely spiritual. The Irish Articles, while denying to the king the right to administer the word and sacraments and the power of the keys, held that it was his prerogative to contain (or limit), all estates and degrees committed to his charge by God, whether ecclesiastical or civil, within their duty, and to restrain the stubborn and evil-doers by the power of the sword.

Such was the current doctrine in Scotland and England and Ireland when the Westminster Assembly began its long and astute discussions on the subject of the civil magistracy in its relations to the Christian Church. Into the story of the differing opinions and the earnest debates, of the struggles of the middle party between the two extremes, of the rise and growth of Erastianism on one side and Independency on the other, of the various propositions discussed, the compromises proposed, and the issues finally reached, it is not practicable here to enter. It is probably safe to say that in one form and another this subject occupied nearly as much time, and absorbed quite as much interest, as the formulation of the Confession or the Catechisms. With much that was concluded as to the divine authority for the civil magistracy, appointed for the glory of God and the public good; as to the lawfulness of accepting and executing such offices in order to maintain piety and justice and peace according to the laws of the commonwealth; as to the obligation to support those holding such offices, to honor them and pay them just tribute and pray for them; and as to the right of civil magistrates to maintain their own ordained positions even by force of arms or by waging war on just and necessary occasions,—with all this we are substantially agreed. But the Assembly, while saying much less than either of the antecedent creeds and guarding the whole subject more

carefully, still declared that the magistrate had inherent power to preserve order and peace in the church, to keep the truth of God pure and suppress all blasphemies and heresies, to reform all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline, and to see that all divine ordinances are duly administered. During an earlier stage of its deliberations it went so far as to adopt a resolution, (Minutes, 89) declaring that the civil magistrate hath authority and it is his duty to provide that the word of God be truly and duly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, church government and discipline established and duly executed according to the Scriptures—thus committing the whole matter of public worship and administration to the jurisdiction of the civil power. It was affirmed that in order to secure these ends, the civil magistrate had authority to call synods at his discretion, to be present at them, and to provide that whatever is enacted in them be according to the mind of God. It was also declared that neither infidelity nor any difference in religion could make void his magisterial authority, or free the people from the obedience due within this sphere.

This sweeping statement as to the prerogatives of the ruling monarch or his representatives in ecclesiastical matters, though more considerate at some points than the antecedent doctrine both on the Continent and in the British Isles, was in fact an awful mistake,—one involving consequences which the Assembly could not at first apprehend, but which its members were soon to experience under the severe discipline of Cromwell, and in the generation following when Episcopacy became again the lawful religion of the realm. In the words of their ablest advocate and historian, God suffered them to be cast into a furnace seven times heated, that they might learn in adversity the lesson they had not thoroughly mastered in prosperity, and from bitter experience be led to realize the full value and extent of the principle enshrined in their own Confession. It is impracticable here to trace these consequences in detail, or to show in how many ways the Presbyterianism of Great Britain suffered from the mischievous doctrine adopted and promulgated by the Assemby. One illustration of this mischief may be seen in the cutting remark of Hallam (Const. Hist.) that the Church of Scotland (the Established Kirk) in her General Assemblies preserves the powers and affects the language of the sixteenth century, while the Erastianism against which she inveighs, secretly controls and paralyzes her vaunted liberties. She cannot but acknowledge—he adds—that the supremacy of the legislature is, like the collar of the watch

dog, the price of food and raiment, and the condition on which alone a religious society can be endowed and established by any prudent commonwealth.

It is important just here to note the vital changes made first by the original American Synod in its Adopting Act, and afterwards more fully made and recorded in this chapter by the first American General Assembly. The third section in the American Confession embodies these changes. It indeed affirms the duty of the civil magistrate to protect the church of our common Lord, to take order that all religious and ecclesiastical assemblies be held without molestation or disturbance, and to see to it that no person is suffered upon pretence either of religion or of infidelity to offer any indignity, violence, abuse or injury to any other person whatsoever. It also affirms that no denomination of Christians shall receive any preference or favor above another from the state, but that all ecclesiastical persons shall enjoy the full, free and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their sacred functions without violence or danger. But on the other hand it affirms broadly, not only that civil magistrates are not empowered to administer the word or the sacraments, or to wield the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, but also that they shall not in any way, even the least, interfere in matters of faith.

It is not to be supposed that this decisive change was the result of abstract investigation merely. The century and a half between A. D. 1648 and A. D. 1788 had effected a radical revolution of opinion on the whole subject, at least in America. Several of the colonies had made the experiment of a state or provincial church, but had abandoned it as, if not erroneous in theory, impracticable in fact. Voluntaryism, or the support of each denomination by the free gifts of its own adherents, had gradually become the general rule. Presbyterians, remembering the civil prosecution of Makemie, and the struggles for equitable footing in New York, the persecutions encountered in Maryland and Virginia, the difficulties which obstructed their denominational development in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, were among the first to welcome the change. As early as A. D. 1729, the original Synod in adopting the ecclesiastical Standards made a formal exception to the clauses in chapters XXI and XXIII,—declaring that it did not receive these clauses as giving civil magistrates controlling power over synods with respect to the exercise of their ministerial authority, or power of any sort to persecute any for their religion. This position was affirmed again in 1736, and also in 1786, in a

communication made to the Dutch church of New York. The consummating action of the first Assembly, 1788, has just been quoted. To this should be added the elaborate and strong statement of Preliminary Principles, adopted at the same date and amended in 1805, as introductory to the Form of Government. In this statement the whole subject is presented in full, and with such clearness and emphasis as forbid all misapprehension respecting the position of American Presbyterianism: See Presb. Digest, 1898, p. 154: also Schaff, Church and State in the United States.

It should be said here that a similar change of opinion took place in Great Britain also. The adoption of the Toleration Act as early as 1689, is one significant sign of such developing change in usage as well as in judgment. The principle of toleration, especially through the advocacy of some prominent English divines, and still more through the progressive mingling of differing sects in English society, and perhaps to some extent—as Lecky claims—through the rise and growing influence of skepticism also, came to be more and more freely recognized. Interference by the state in church affairs, especially in matters of controversy and heresy, became by degrees less frequent and less popular. Persecution by the civil power gradually ceased, and the right to full religious liberty was more and more cordially regarded. Dissent was by degrees granted recognition and privilege to an extent which the divines of Westminster would never have approved. The transition in the present century is especially marked. The United Church of Scotland now requires no approval of any expression in the creed which teaches, or is supposed to teach, compulsory or persecuting or intolerant principles in the domain of religion. The Free Church disclaims all intolerant or persecuting principles, refuses to regard the Confession as favoring intolerance or persecution, and declares that subscription to it is not inconsistent with liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment. One other branch of Scotch Presbyterianism declares that the use of civil coercion in any form in order to constrain men to renounce a false creed or to profess a true creed, is incompatible with the nature of the Christian religion, and must ever prove ineffectual in practice: Innes: Law of Creeds.

5. The Pope in the State: his civil jurisdiction denied.

One clause in the fourth section of this chapter should be noted here, although the subject appears again in another connection,—the clause which declares that the pope of Rome has no jurisdiction in civil affairs, or any power over civil magistrates or any of their people, within their own proper dominion:

Minutes, 224. The question raised by this clause is not whether the pope is the ordained head of the Christian Church or is, as was declared, the Antichrist mentioned in Scripture, but the secondary question whether the pope, being as Romanism claimed the true head of the church in all lands, has any right to determine, for example, the lawful succession to the throne in any government, or the authority to crown emperors or to direct them in the exercise of any civil functions or prerogatives. The question carries us back through many centuries in European history, even to the era of Hildebrand or the first Leo. We are familiar with the civil assumptions of the papacy during the Middle Ages, and down to the period of the Reformation. We know how conspicuous a part the issue of supremacy between the ruling pope and Henry VIII. played in the introduction of Protestantism in England, and also in determining the attitude of British Protestantism subsequently down to the era of the Assembly. And in the light of such history we may readily see the large significance of this little clause when first adopted. It was not merely opposition to Romanism as a more or less degenerate type of Christianity, or even to the recognition of the church of Rome as entitled to some footing in English society—though this was by no means granted — that was here declared. It was the asserted right of popes to put themselves above kings, or the church as represented in them above the state, which the Assembly repudiated and condemned. It was not the Presbyterian party alone that took this position. Beware of the growth of this Romish Seed, cried Milton in one of his most ardent treatises in defence of religious liberty. In his discussion of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes he said with emphasis: Popery is a double thing to deal with, and claims a twofold power, the ecclesiastical and the political, both usurped, and one supporting the other. And he closes his famous tract on Toleration with the declaration that popery would be to England the worst of superstitions and the heaviest of all God's judgments.

The matter was one which had agitated Protestant Europe from the outset of the Reformation. If the claim of the papacy to supreme control over rulers as well as people was legitimate—if the reigning pope had power as the legate of God to excommunicate any prince who should admit Protestantism within his realm, or should protect Protestant leaders or communions from any penalties which the papacy might exact,—if the old domination which from the days of the Gregories had asserted itself in the various states of Europe, and which had compelled emperors to

kiss the papal toe and to receive their insignia of royalty at Rome, was to be continued as aforetime, there was of course no reasonable ground of hope that Protestantism could survive even for a single generation. Hence the Reformers in their creeds and elsewhere were strenuous in denying not only the assumed right of Rome to control religious belief and regulate the interior affairs of the Church of Christ, but also the equally dangerous claim of political supremacy, in whatever form. The Pontiffs, says the Augsburg Confession, in the Article De Potestate Ecclesiastica, trusting in the power of the keys, have not only appointed new kinds of service and burdened the consciences of men, but have also endeavored to transfer worldly kingdoms from one to another and to despoil emperors of their power and authority. After drawing clear lines between the ecclesiastical and the civil spheres, this venerable symbol enters its earnest protest against such ecclesiastical usurpation: Let it not by force enter into the office of another; let it not transfer earthly kingdoms; let it not abrogate the laws of magistrates; let it not take away from their lawful obedience; let it not hinder judgments touching any civil ordinances or contracts; let it not prescribe laws to the magistrate touching the form of the republic. This was in harmony with the terse saying of Luther: The end of the state is temporal peace, but the end of the church is peace everlasting.

One of the most strenuous of these declarations against the civil aspirations of Rome may be found in the second Scotch Confession, or National Covenant of 1580: We abhor and detest all contrary Religion and Doctrine, but chiefly all kind of Papistrie in general and particular heads. In special, we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the scriptures of God, upon the Kirk, the civil Magistrate and consciences of men; all his tyrannous laws made upon indifferent things against our Christian liberty . . . his worldly monarchy and wicked hierarchy. The Anglican Articles (XXVII) simply say in the briefest and sternest terms: The bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this realm of England. The Irish Articles (59) are much more specific: The Pope, neither of himself nor by any authority of the church or see of Rome, or by any other means with any other, hath any power or authority to depose the king or dispose of any of his kingdoms or dominions, or to authorize any other prince to invade or annoy him or his countries, or to discharge any of his subjects of their allegiance and obedience to his majesty, or to give license to any of them to bear arms, raise tumult, or offer any violence to his royal person, state or government.

The highly specialized form of this Article, noted in conjunction with its date and place, indicates quite clearly the motives which led the Westminster divines to introduce into their formulary the prohibitory clause respecting the possible intrusion of the papal authority into the sphere of the civil magistracy in Britain. There were practical reasons, such as the Irish Article suggests, for guarding the English mind against all surrender to the domination of Rome, in civil as well as in ecclesiastical affairs. The caution was heard and was carefully heeded, and the possibility of the interference of the papacy with the person or prerogatives of the sovereigns of Britain was for the time, and probably for all time, effectively shut out. The question of the succession to the British crown has not been since the Reformation, and is now wholly unlikely ever to be, determined in Rome. Moreover, the present measure of release from papal influence over civil affairs in France, in Germany, and even in Austria and Italy, is such as to preclude the probability of such political interference through all the future. In view of all that has transpired in political Europe since Pius IX. issued his famous Syllabus Errorum in 1864, what is stated with so much emphasis in that document (VI) respecting civil society and its subordination to the church, seems like a dead and offensive anachronism. Still less is the probability that any papal interference will ever be felt potentially in such a country and under such a government as ours. Yet it may as well stand, as for two centuries and more it has stood, as one of the tenets of our Protestant faith: Much less hath the pope any power or jurisdiction over civil magistrates in their dominions, or over any of their people; and least of all, to deprive them of their dominions or lives if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretence whatsoever.

With this general conception of the nature and functions and rights of the civil magistracy in hand, we may now turn to consider the two chapters in the Confession which apparently best present themselves for inspection in the light of this general doctrine: the chapter (XXII) on *Lawful Oaths and Vows*, and the chapter (XXIV) which treats of *Marriage and Divorce*. While it is not altogether easy to determine why these chapters, especially the former, should be introduced into the creed, or should be introduced at this point in the progressive evolution of doctrine, and in the particular form given them, we may with profit study them as they stand,—

6. The Oath, lawful and unlawful: nature and obligation.

taking up first the subject of the *Oath*, as presented in the first four sections of chapter XXII. The general line of distinction between an oath and a vow appears in the fact that an oath is taken between man and man in the presence of God as witness, while a vow is made between man and God as contracting parties. In taking up the oath distinctively for present consideration, no notice is necessary of profanity in general, oaths in a looser and lower sense: what has been said already respecting all such violations of the third Commandment will suffice. The oath, strictly speaking, may be defined as a statement or promise or covenant made to man as in the presence of God and under a sense of his supervision, and of accountability to him, accompanied with an appeal to him for the sincerity and truthfulness of what is stated or promised. In other words, an oath is a pledge made to others that what is uttered is true in itself and is uttered under such a direct sense of responsibility. Paley (Mor. Phil.) defines an oath as a calling upon God to witness or to take notice of what is said, with an implied renunciation of his favor or invocation of his vengeance if what is affirmed is false, or if what is promised is not performed. The asseveration in the case is thus essentially a religious act, the party acknowledging that the eye of God is upon him as he makes his declaration, and consenting in substance that the truthfulness of what he declares shall be tested by the divine adjudication. Belief in the existence of God, in his sovereign administration over human affairs, and in the reality of a future state of award and punishment, is thus implied in the act. That an element of imprecation enters, according to the view of Paley, into the transaction is manifest—the person substantially submitting his act to the divine judgment, with an acknowledgment of guilt and of ill-desert if the oath be false. This imprecatory element is often recognized in the form of the oath prescribed by civil statutes. It is proper, however, to add the corresponding thought that an oath also rightly involves a prayer that God would accept the truthful statement or promise, and would bless with his favor the attesting person.

Several classes of oaths are recognizable. There is an assertory or attestational oath, which consists of a simple affirmation that what is stated is the truth, and the whole truth so far as known to the person testifying, and nothing that is not true. There is a promissory oath, which is a pledge to perform or execute under certain specified conditions a covenant which has been made between the covenanting party and some other person or persons. A judicial oath is one taken in the course of justice, imposed by the

civil authority and under certain appointed forms of law : an extra-judicial oath is one made not under such civil obligation but voluntarily, and in order to confirm some truth or covenant. There are also particular oaths, such as the oath of office by those who enter upon any public position or service, the oath of allegiance or of conformity or abjuration, the purgatorial oath in which a person swears that he is innocent of an offense charged. It will be seen that what is common to all these varieties is a solemn appeal to God for the truthfulness of what is said or done, and for the sincerity of the speaker or actor ;—the person, in the language of the first section, solemnly *calling God to witness what he asserteth or promiseth*, and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth. The Heidelberg Catechism (99–101) defines an oath to be a calling upon God as the only searcher of hearts, to bear witness to the truth, and to punish if one swears falsely ; authorizes the oath whenever the magistrate requires it, or it may be needful otherwise to maintain and promote fidelity and truth ; and declares that we must not by false swearing, or by unnecessary oaths, or by silence or connivance, violate the third commandment.

The right to make oath, and the corresponding right of civil government to require oaths in certain appropriate circumstances, have been recognized in crude form even among pagan nations ; and such right is justified on both sides by both precept and usage in the Old Testament, and also by our Lord and his apostles. The objections to the act, urged by some Christian minds and apparently sustained by certain sayings of Christ, are clearly insufficient. What our Lord and the inspired James sought to correct was the making of oaths for slight reasons or on trivial occasions, or in a manner inconsistent with the solemnity due to the act ; and perhaps especially, in the case of Christ, the swearing by any other object than the Deity, however sacred. *The name of God only*, it is said in section second of the chapter, is *that by which men ought to swear :* to swear vainly or rashly by that name, or *to swear at all by any other thing*, is sinful and is to be abhorred. Under these conditions it is further said that, in matters of weight and moment, an oath is warranted by the New Testament as well as the Old,—all holy fear and reverence being exercised. The making of oaths is therefore a just obligation on the part of the Christian as of other men, and the right to require such oaths may be enforced by lawful authority in state or church : Digest 1898, p. 672. It is said to be a sin to refuse an oath *touching anything that is good and just*, when thus imposed. The

Augsburg and Second Helvetic Confessions and also the Thirty-Nine Articles recognize the right of the civil magistrate to impose oaths, and the obligation of Christians both to make oath when thus required and to meet faithfully every obligation thus acknowledged. On the other side, perjury—which is defined by Coke as willful and absolute and false swearing in any matter material to the issue when a lawful oath has been properly administered in some judicial proceeding—is not only a crime under human law, but a dreadful sin against God who is grievously insulted by being called in as a witness to sustain a lie: L. C. 113. Subornation of perjury, or the hiring or inducing of another to swear falsely, is also regarded in all Christian lands as both criminal and sinful.

The third section suggests certain limitations which it is important to note. No civil authority, for example, can rightly require any man to bind himself by an oath to anything but what is good and just, nor can any Christian under any stress of circumstances submit to such illicit demand. An oath, it is tersely said, *cannot oblige to sin*. The person swearing must himself judge the requisition to be right, and the matter in question to be such as he can conscientiously certify. In the case of a promissory oath or pledge, he is limited by *what he is able to perform*, and by what in his heart he is *resolved to perform*, if such ability continues. For illustration, the oath of allegiance to a certain form of government, or of conformity with certain prescripts or regulations of civil government, cannot rightly be taken by one who is hostile to the authority imposing the oath, or who has it in his heart to refuse such conformity: he may decline to take the oath and suffer the consequences of such refusal, but he may not as a Christian profess to assume an obligation which he does not intend to fulfill. British history, both prior to the Westminster Assembly and subsequently, furnishes vivid examples both of men who under the influence of fear or of cupidity or ambition or some other kindred motive were guilty of duplicity such as this, and of other and nobler men who refused the submission required even at the cost of position, of property and support, and of life itself.

The fourth section introduces a new and very practical question in the proposition that an oath is always to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, *without equivocation or mental reservation*. The Irish Articles (67) state the principle still more fully in their declaration that the popish doctrine of equivocation and mental reservation is ungodly, and tendeth plainly to the subversion of all human society. This is a protest against

all trifling with the terms of a covenant or promise once made: what is pledged, if it be a thing not sinful, *binds to performance* always, although such performance be to our hurt. Any personal loss that may follow from the pledge is to be faithfully endured, since the possibility of such loss was involved or implied in the original transaction, and since the other party expected that the covenant would be fulfilled, and has an invincible right to demand such fulfillment. And it is added that an oath once taken is *not to be violated*, though made to heretics or infidels. In other words, the character of the opposite party, although it should prove to be the worst possible, cannot absolve us from the obligation to do to them or for them what we have once solemnly promised them before God, and under conscious accountability to him, that we will do if the ability remains. Any harm or loss that could come from the execution of such a pledge would be incomparably less important than that which would follow our swearing falsely in the case. But on the other hand, if one has fallen into the sin of taking an oath to do some wrong thing, such as joining with others in committing some crime, there can be no proper obligation to carry out such a wicked pledge: an unlawful oath is ipso facto void. Subtle questions of casuistry will arise here, such as the subsequent payment of ransom to a band of robbers when life would be forfeited by the refusal of a promise to pay; and some such questions are, on both sides, very difficult to solve. Yet the general law here laid down must stand; *Nor is it to be violated although made to heretics or infidels.*

Pascal in his Provincial Letters has exposed with unflinching fidelity, not only the theological errors and false doctrines of the Jesuit order, but also those pernicious principles and maxims in the sphere of morals, by which for a time that noted order corrupted alike the minds and the lives of men, and for the inculcation and practice of which it has since his day been expelled as an order from most of the countries of northern and central Europe. It is the remark of an acute English historian that casuistry, vibrating between the extremes of impracticable severity and contemptible indulgence, has been the inevitable outgrowth of the papal practice of confession and absolution. In his discussion of the Jesuitic rule of probabilities, of their deceptive teaching respecting intention as distinguished from action, and of their theory of mental reservation, Pascal has shown how utterly loose the order were in both opinion and usage, and how ruinous their teaching must be to all sincere and manly and pure life within the church. He has made it evident that they would

justify the violation of oaths, treachery to promises and covenants, deceit, judicial venality, calumny, falsehood, cheating and theft, unchastity and even murder, where the avowed end, being the glory of God and the upbuilding of his church, would seem to be subserved by such departures from the plain law of Christian integrity. He exposes in the most fearless and faithful manner the utterly false principles of ethics which underlay their corrupting counsels and practices, shows how the church must be injured and vitiated through their teaching, and finally warns them against the condemnation which must ultimately befall them, and fully justifies himself in his exposure of their erroneous belief and their immoral practice. Never has any organized departure from sound morality, justifying itself under cover of loyalty to the cause of religion, been compelled to face such an exposure; and well will it be if the Provincial Letters shall stand as a perpetual warning to Romanist and Protestant alike, against all infidelity to oaths and covenants and promises among Christian men.*

7. The Religious Vow: Nature and worth: Monastic vows.

A vow, as distinguished from an oath, is a promise given to God or a covenant made with God directly. It is said in the fifth section of this chapter that a vow is of *like nature with a promissory oath;* that it is not to be *made to any creature but to God only;* and that it ought to be made with *like religious care*, and be performed with the like, or even far greater temper of *faithfulness*, since in it we are dealing immediately with God and with God alone. The conception of God as in sovereignty endowed with absolute right over us and ours, of a gracious relation established between him and us through Christ, of a loving intimacy instituted as within the household, and of a filial desire on our part to show our regard for him in this relation and our joyous readiness to give to him as our Father whatever we can, underlies the entire doctrine of

*MAINE (Ancient Law) says that the papal casuistry went on with its dexterous refinements till it ended in so attenuating the moral features of actions, and so belying the moral instincts of our being, that at length the conscience of mankind rose suddenly in revolt against it, and consigned to a common ruin the system and its doctors. The blow long pending—he adds—was finally struck in the Provincial Letters of Pascal, and since the appearance of these memorable Letters no moralist of the smallest influence or credit, has ever avowedly conducted his speculations in the footsteps of the Casuists.—There is pungency as well as truthfulness in the famous epigram of that age: Si cum Jesuitis, non cum Jesu itis.

vows as held by Christians. In an inferior sense engagements, or pledges solemnly made among men, as in the marriage contract, are characterized as vows: acts of special devotion or sacrifice to some cherished interest, personal or public, are sometimes so described. But in the full sense a vow contemplates no parties but God on the one side and the contracting or pledging human actor on the other; and thus viewed, it becomes in the highest degree an act of reverence and adoration—an act of religion. As such, vows were made specially in the form of votive offerings to the deities of Greece and Rome, and are still made almost universally among the special devotees of the various natural faiths of the world. Frequent instances of vows and of preceptive enjoining of vows are recorded in the Old Testament, and occasional though less frequent examples appear in the New Testament also. In some periods of the Christian church vows of various classes have been extensively made and observed; and in general it may be said that the vow, like the oath, is a permanent, though not to all Christians alike or in all ages alike, an indispensable feature of practical religion.

The nature and validity of vows have been, especially among Protestants, matters of special discussion. Positive vows, such as the free offering to God of things especially dear or valuable to us, are ordinarily designed to be expressions of gratitude or devotion,—particularly in view of some danger averted, such as recovery from serious illness or deliverance from shipwreck or immunity in battle, or of some peculiar blessing received, such as an unexpected inheritance or an unanticipated appointment to some place of honor or profit. There are also what are termed negative vows, which are simply pledges to abstain from some evil courses, with an implied imprecation of divine disfavor in the event of failure to carry out the promise thus made. The religious vow is in general a special surrendery and devotion of self to a religious life or work, in view of the divine claims, and of the rewards supposed to be divinely pledged to those who make such voluntary consecration. Interpreted as an offering of something to God which is really not already due to him, the vow was questioned, if not rejected, by both Luther and Calvin as involving the Roman error of works of supererogation,—the assumption that the Christian does not already belong altogether, body and spirit, endowments and possessions, to God in Christ. Christianity, as they maintained, includes the complete consecration of self to the divine service—a consecration recognized in baptism and again in the act of confirmation, which ceremonies they

regarded as comprehensive and ultimate vows. The Reformers generally were led to similar conclusions through their intense hostility to the monasticism, with its multiplied vows and its flagrant violations of such vows, especially by the religious orders, which constituted such a scandal in the century just preceding the Reformation. Zwingli declares that those who make the vow of chastity or celibacy such as the monastic system required, are constrained to the act alike by stupid presumption and by puerile arrogance. Various Confessions, from the Augsburg to the Scotch, protest against all such vows,—the latter with characteristic fervor declaring that those who take the three chief Roman vows of continence, obedience and poverty, together with all shavelings of sundry sorts, ab ecclesia Scoticana damnati sunt.

Yet there is Christian wisdom in the recognition of the doctrine that vows under proper limitations, may be voluntarily made to God *in way of thankfulness* for mercies received or *for obtaining what we want*, or to bring ourselves thereby into closer relation to him; and that whenever thus made, such vows will be acceptable to him. It is carefully said (sec. vii) that we are not to vow to do any thing that is *forbidden in the Word*, or any thing that would hinder us in the discharge of any duty commanded in the Word: and further, that what is vowed must be something which is *within our own power*, or something respecting which we have *a promise of gracious ability* from God. The obligation in the case is always inward and personal: neither the church nor the state has the right to compel any one to make or to execute such subjective pledges. It is also urged (sec. vi) that the vow must be made not only voluntarily or without inward or outward compulsion, but *out of faith and conscience of duty*—as a free expression of Christian loyalty and love. The Augsburg Confession teaches that vows, if made, should relate to what is possible, should be voluntary, should be made sponte et consulto, and should be always in harmony with divine law. Thus limited, vows may be as warrantable now as during the Hebraic dispensation or in the first Christian century. In this sense Calvin, while earnestly protesting against monastic vows and those who make them, admits (Inst. B. IV: 13), that particular vows may be made with a biblical warrant, but counsels that they be such as are sober and of short duration. Certainly such vows are not precluded altogether by the fact that all that we are and have belongs already to Christ, and that we have nothing to give him which is not already his own—bought with the incalculable price of his mediation and sacrifice in our behalf. Such a view would detract as well from

the significance and acceptableness of all forms of sacrifice as acts of worship, and all direct consecration of powers or time or possessions to the divine service. The Thirty-nine Articles (XIV) do indeed declare that voluntary works, over and above the divine commandments, cannot be taught without arrogance and impiety, since by them men declare that they do not only render to God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required. So the Westminster Confession (XVI : iv) teaches that they who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do. But these statements were clearly aimed, not at truly pious vows made in the right spirit, such as we are now contemplating, but at the false and pernicious theory of works of supererogation—the bonum melius of Thomas Aquinas—which Romanism has so long and strenuously maintained.

The subject of monastic vows, and particularly the vow of celibacy and chastity, will come into view more fully in connection with the biblical doctrine of marriage. But the wide variety of such vows, including complete separation from the world, the surrendering of all independent rights of property, the breaking away from all natural and domestic relationships, devotion to certain routines of religious observance, abstinence from food and the endurance of special privations in body and person, consecration to some special form of religious service such as the care of the sick, missionary labors and sacrifices in the interest of the church,—all this wide variety of vows may be tested by the general principles just defined. It would certainly be a serious error to pronounce sweeping condemnation on them all as at variance with the doctrine and temper of spiritual Christianity. It cannot be doubted that, in the instance of such men as Pascal and his Port Royalist associates, of such women as Madame Guyon, of whom John Wesley said that much pure gold was mixed with her conventual asceticisms, and that we may search many centuries to find a woman who was such a pattern of true holiness,—in many such instances the vows made, the devotion and consecration offered to God, were truly and lovingly accepted of him. Yet the sad fact remains that though justified by Rome in both doctrine and practice, the monastic vow was even in the earlier ages a fruitful source of delusion and spiritual degeneracy, and at the date of the Reformation was almost chief among the wrongs, the corruptions, the unspeakable mischiefs, against which Zwingli

and Luther and Calvin were agreed in their magnificent protestations. We indeed need little more than appears in the Provincial Letters and in other authentic literature, to convince us that monasticism with its vows and its violations, was from first to last in fact, if not in theory, a cancerous excrescence upon historic Christianity.

8. Marriage, its foundation and warrant: polygamy: concubinage.

In taking up the important chapter (XXIV) which treats of *Marriage and Divorce*, we should bear in mind the fact that we are still contemplating matters which, like the oath, have certain political as well as ecclesiastical and spiritual relations. For while marriage is primarily and chiefly an ordinance of God, and while the Scriptures expressly define marriage, and lay down the fundamental law respecting the divorcement of persons once united in marriage, such is the constitution of human society that all civilized states are constrained to recognize the matter, as in various aspects a legitimate subject of both civil and criminal legislation. Recognizing therefore the propriety of introducing such a chapter into the Confession just at this point, we may turn first to consider marriage itself as defined in the first four sections of this chapter, and as more fully presented in the original Directory for Worship, and especially in the American emendation, Ch. XII. The subject seems to have elicited considerable interest in the Assembly, particularly in connection with the formulating of the Directory: whether marriage is a religious or a civil contract, or both,—whether it should be spoken of as a sacrament or act of worship,—whether the ceremony should be performed by any other than a minister,—whether heathen marriages are to be regarded as true marriages,—whether marriages should always be solemnized in a church,—whether certain hours or seasons should be designated,—and finally whether it is needful that all these matters should be specified in a Directory: Minutes, 6–12.

Using the term to describe, not the ceremony or transaction, but rather the state of matrimony into which the parties are introduced by such ceremony, whether under ecclesiastical or civil warrant, marriage may be defined as a voluntary union of one man and one woman, spirit and body, in a covenant and relation as enduring as life, in accordance with the law of nature and the ordinance of God. To use a current legal definition, marriage is a contract (or relation) in which a man and a woman reciprocally engage to live with each other during their joint lives, and

to discharge toward each other the duties imposed by law on the relation of husband and wife. The basis for such union lies partly in the sexual constitution and instinct of the contracting parties, but mainly in their intellectual and social structure and adaptations each to the other, and in their constitutional capacity for such mutual affection as can be experienced in no other relationship of life. Marriage is thus an institution founded in the nature and mutual needs of the parties, God creating them male and female, not physically alone, but esthetically and ethically also, in order that such a relation might be established between them, primarily for their mutual happiness and development, but also for the continuation of the race through their union. Marriage thus contemplates the family and the home prospectively, the birth of children through such union and their nurture and education within the household ; and beyond this the founding of communities, the organization of tribes and of states, and the evolution of humanity along the lines which this domestic relationship prescribes. Paley describes the design of this institution as being first of all the comfort and growth and bliss of the persons thus conjoined, then the production of children and the making of suitable provision for their development and education within the home, and finally the peace and security of society and the firmer establishing of all government and of social and moral order among men. Kent (Commentaries) declares that marriage has its foundation in nature, and is the only lawful relation by which Providence has permitted the continuance of the human race. He adds that in every age this institution has had a propitious influence on the moral improvement and happiness of mankind,—that it is one of the chief foundations of social order, and that we may place to its credit a great share of the blessings which flow from refinement of manners, the education of children, the sense of justice, and the cultivation of the liberal arts.

The first section of this chapter affirms in brief terms that marriage was divinely ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, and for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and the increase of the church with a holy seed,—what Bushnell (Christian Nurture) happily described as the outpropagating power of the Christian stock—and further for the prevention of such uncleanness and such consequent degeneracy physical and moral as would exist in human society if there were no such institution among men. The American Directory for Worship speaks at length of the particular duties which are incumbent on those who enter into this relation :—a high esteem and mutual

love for one another, bearing with their several infirmities and weaknesses, encouraging one another under the various ills of life, comforting each other in sickness, in honesty and industry providing for their mutual support in temporal things, praying for and encouraging one another in things which pertain to God and to their immortal souls, and living together as heirs of the grace of life. The Directory adds also the more general statement that marriage is not a private matter merely, but is rather of a public nature; that God himself has instituted it for the comfort and happiness of mankind; that the welfare of civil society, the happiness of families, and the credit of religion, are deeply interested or involved in it; and therefore that it is proper not only that the church should sanction it, but that every commonwealth for the good of society should make laws to regulate marriage—laws which, it is added, all citizens are bound to obey. The Directory expresses the general view of Protestantism in the statement that although an institution of such special sacredness, marriage is not to be regarded as a Christian sacrament, belonging exclusively to the church of Christ, but is a relation into which others than believers may lawfully enter, and one whose holy obligations rest alike on all who agree to such covenant. It is not intended by this teaching to imply that marriage has lost its religious quality and is become a civil institution solely; for among the services which religion has conferred on the race, there are few of greater value than the supernatural sanctity with which it has invested this precious ordinance. In the debate in the Assembly on the subject, Henderson held that marriage though not a sacrament, is not to be regarded as a casual contract merely, but rather as a covenant of God, which may not be dissolved by the mere consent of the parties: Minutes, 6–12. The Roman church regards marriage as one of the five minor sacraments, declaring that the grace which perfects natural love, which confirms marriage as an indissoluble union, and sanctifies the married in their actual relation, flows down upon the ordinance directly through the passion and merit of Christ; and pronounces its anathema on all who say that marriage is not thus one of the seven sacraments of the evangelic law, instituted by Christ the Lord: Syllabus Errorum, 8.

It is agreed by Protestants and Catholics alike that, while the ceremony of marriage is primarily a religious act, resting for its ultimate validity on the ordinance of God, and should therefore whenever practicable be performed under the sanction of the church, it is also a civil ceremonial, properly regulated by statutory legislation, and equally valid when celebrated in due form

by the civil magistrate. In some countries, where differences of faith or other special reasons seem to require, a double ceremony, civil and ecclesiastical, may be celebrated according to the special prescripts of local law. The limitations as to relationship within whose boundaries marriage is prohibited, were first defined in the Levitic code, but these regulations have passed without essential change into the legislation of nearly all Christian lands, and now constitute in general the common as well as the biblical law on the subject. Marriage, it is said in the third section of this chapter, ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the Word: it is justly added that no law of man, nor any consent of the parties, can make such incestuous marriages lawful. The ultimate warrant for such limitations lies back of the Levitical law itself, and is found in the nature of the relationships prohibited, and still more deeply in the constitution of the family, and in certain physical conditions which are in their nature and effect prohibitory. The only question under this head which has arisen in recent times—the question whether a man may lawfully marry the sister of a wife deceased—has generally been answered in the negative both by church authority and by civil enactment. In the original Confession, as accepted in Great Britain, it is expressly stated that neither husband nor wife may marry any kindred of a wife or husband deceased, that may be nearer to them in blood than their own kindred whom they are forbidden to marry. But this rule has been stricken from the American Confession (1887) and is no longer prescriptive law within its domain, although there still exists an extensive sentiment of disapproval of such marriages, based on certain possibilities of domestic and social harm which their recognition as legal might involve.

It should be added here that in addition to the natural limitations just noted, the Confession urges a moral limitation in the advisory declaration that, while it is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able with judgment to give their consent, it is the duty of Christians *to marry only in the Lord;* and the term Christian, is defined by the phrase, *such as are godly*, and by the other phrase, so suggestive of the age in which the Confession was written, *such as profess the true Reformed religion*. These persons are here counselled against being unequally yoked in marriage, not only with such as are notoriously wicked in their lives, but also with such as maintain damnable heresies; and it is also characteristic of the times and of the temper of the Assembly, that the latter class are more specifically described as *infidels*,

papists or other idolaters. In the proposed Revision it was suggested that the phrase, damnable heresies, be omitted, and that for the phrase, papists and other idolaters, there should be substituted, adherents of false religions,—a statement at least sufficiently strong to secure all the practicable ends sought by such counsel. Unquestionably the marriage of a believer with one who does not believe in religion, and especially with one who on any ground is openly opposed to the faith and church of Christ, is a questionable step, and may sometimes prove to be a disastrous mistake.

Marriage as thus defined and limited,—a holy vow, covenant, sacramentum, divinely ordained—is here set over against two deadly sins, polygamy and concubinage in whatever form. Polygamy and its occasional counterpart in polyandry are crimes, not only against the law of Scripture and the legislation of civilized countries generally, but also against those laws of nature which call for the union, not of one man with several women or of one woman with several men in a species of marriage, but of one man with one woman only. We are confronted here by the fact, so frequently recorded in the Old Testament, that such unlawful and unnatural connections existed among the Hebrews, as it also existed and still exists extensively in the heathen world. The fact is often perplexing and painful as it stands, but in the case in question its darkness is relieved on one side by the obvious and more and more strenuous commendation of monogamy in the Old Testament as the only legitimate law for mankind, and on the other by the clear and mandatory requisitions of the New Testament, and especially by the teaching of our Lord himself. Universal Christendom will agree in substance, if not in form, with the canon of the Council of Trent: If any one saith that it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time, and that this is not prohibited by any divine law, let him be anathema. Even among the Hebrews polygamy proved its poisonous quality by its corrupting and degrading effects—effects faithfully recorded in the earlier Scriptures. Among pagan peoples it has in all ages shown itself hostile in essence to all those better influences which are centered in every home where one man and one woman dwell together in sweet content amid the sanctities of domestic life. The common law of nearly all civilized countries pronounces polygamy not only an offence against public morality, but a heinous crime against the state: see decision of the U. S. Supreme Court. Nor can any one doubt that if the institution of marriage were abolished, and polygamy were to

become a general substitute, not only the destruction of home but the ruin of society itself would follow. It is certain that our human life in this age has no foe more subtle, no enemy more to be dreaded, than that socialistic anarchism which would subvert human government, abolish all present laws and institutions, dissolve among others the bond of holy wedlock, and thus render society a burning hell of selfishness and passion and unholy lust.

Concubinage in whatever form is an evil equally great—a sin equally dark and dreadful. Here again we are confronted by the records of such concubinage among the patriarchs, and in the later periods of Jewish history. But we are not to infer that God, even in those infantile eras of moral development, approved what for the time he did not imperatively prohibit. It may be that he deemed it best to permit the experiment for a season, in order that the lesson of abstinence from this evil might be more thoroughly learned by all mankind. It is not wise to draw imaginary lines here by way of justification, between polygamy and concubinage as they existed among the chosen people, and the same evils as they occurred and are still occurring in the pagan world. However meliorated these offences may have been by the presence and influence of a better religion, and however thoroughly they were by degrees eliminated from Jewish life, they could never have been anything else than offences in the eyes of him who had taught Adam to say, Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh. Concubinage, even under the most helpful restrictions of Hebrew or of Roman law, could never be made a natural, a just, a permanent or a holy state. It is painful to be obliged to confess that this offence did not die out wholly under the influence of early Christianity. As late as the fourth century (Council of Toledo, A. D. 400) while married believers were excommunicated for having concubines, unmarried men were not condemned for like indulgence. Still the wrong and evil of such usage cannot be questioned under the Gospel: elements of lust and degradation, of discord and misery, lie in the relation wheresoever found. If marriage, as enjoined and blessed in the Bible, is right and beneficent and happy, concubinage like polygamy must be forever wrong, unholy and wretched.

The subject of celibacy, or of unwedded life, especially in the interest of personal piety or of service within the church, requires brief consideration at this point. Isaac Taylor (Ancient Christianity) has told the remarkable story of the growth of this opinion and usage in the early church, especially from the

third century onward. Abstinence from marriage was at first supposed to be commended by Christ and afterwards more distinctly by Paul, as an essential condition of higher and purer life in the believer. But there is no historic evidence that during the first two or even three centuries it was in any way enjoined, even upon the official members of the church. It was at first regarded chiefly as a privilege which here and there a saint, especially among the clergy, might fitly seek to gain; but at length it became, and during the long centuries before the Reformation continued to be a requirement and rule,—commended as the only adequate qualification for service in the priesthood, and enjoined by papal rescripts as well as by many eminent examples. Prohibition of marriage as being an unholy state for those who should minister at the altar, and including by degrees all the minor clergy as well as the bishops and the higher orders of priesthood, followed logically until in theory if not in practice celibacy became for those in such positions, and finally for all monks and nuns and monastics of whatever sort or grade, the imperative law. That law was indeed often violated especially in the dark ages by the marriage of priests, and probably still more frequently by the establishment of illicit domestic relations; but the ecclesiastical requirement grew steadily both in the extent of its reach and in its imperativeness, until it became, as it still is, an essential condition of acceptable service in the offices of the church. It was also believed that such abstinence from marriage was an indispensable requisite to the attainment of special holiness, and that even social fellowship with persons of the other sex was incompatible with purity of heart. It is said that for twenty years Loyola, the founder of the order of Jesuits, never looked upon the face of woman. Monks and nuns in all the various monastic organizations of Rome counted it their duty for this reason to lead in like manner an unwedded life—secluded from all contact with the opposite sex. And the Council of Trent laid down what may now be regarded as the indissoluble law of Romanism in the Canon: If any one saith that the marriage state is to be placed above the state of virginity or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or in celibacy, let him be anathema. Well said the eloquent Jeremy Taylor: This was no law of God: it was against the rights and against the necessities of nature: it was unnatural and unreasonable: it was not for the edification of the church: it was no advantage to spiritual life.

9. Celibacy: Papal law: Protestant condemnation.

Against this doctrine, with all the mischiefs and sins involved in it, which Wyclif as early as the fourteenth century had declared against as contrary to the Christian religion, the Reformers from the first entered most indignant protest. Zwingli cries out, Pfui der Schande! I know of no greater scandal than the prohibition of lawful marriage to priests, while they are permitted for money to have concubines. Luther, following the example of Zwingli, indicated his view by breaking his monastic vow of continence, and marrying Catherine von Bora,—a step which he took, not only for his personal comfort amid his multiplied labors and struggles, but also—he expressly declared—as a testimony against the papal law. Calvin, while recognizing virginity as a virtue not to be despised, and even commending it in certain conditions on the authority of Christ and of Paul, as he supposed, affirmed (Inst. B. IV: 12) that the interdiction of marriage to priests is an act of impious tyranny, not only contrary to the Word of God, but at variance with every principle of justice; men having no right to prohibit what the Lord hath left free, especially when God has provided in his Word, that liberty in this matter should not be invaded. The Augsburg Confession takes up the protest in most vigorous form, affirming that God hath commanded to honor marriage,—that in all good commonwealths even among the heathen, law hath adorned marriage with very great honors,—that impure celibacy brings forth very many offences, adulteries and other enormities,—that in the early church, under the divine command, marriage was allowed and approved to priests as to others,—that vows to refrain from marriage are unlawful and void,—and that it is great cruelty to enforce upon priests the obligation of perpetual virginity. The second Helvetic Confession is more moderate in terms but equally decisive in doctrine. Marriage, it affirms (XXIX) was instituted by God who blessed it richly, and indissolubly joined man and woman to live together in intimate love and harmony. Yet it adds that those who have the gift of celibacy from heaven, so as to be pure and continent toto animo, may serve the Lord in that vocation in simplicity and humility, but without exalting themselves above others. The Saxon Confession, after pronouncing strongly in favor of wedlock, declares with emphasis that the laws of the popes concerning single life, like the Turkish manner (polygamy) have caused great deformity in this last old age of the world.

Without referring to other continental creeds, we may note the considerate doctrine of the Thirty-Nine Articles (XXXII) that bishops, priests and deacons (the three orders of the Anglican

church) are not commanded by the law of God either to vow the estate of single life or to abstain from marriage: therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christian men, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve better to godliness. The Westminster Confession goes farther (XXII: 7) and declares that popish monastical vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty and regular obedience—the three major vows required of all Roman priests—are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares in which no Christian may entangle himself.—These confessional affirmations sufficiently indicate what is at present the current doctrine on this subject among the Protestant churches. It may be noted here that the Greek communions generally, while enjoining celibacy upon their bishops, require that all priests should be married men: Lea, Sacerdotal Celibacy.

10. Divorce; proper grounds: other alleged warrants.

Without pausing to consider either the argument for marriage from Scripture, such as appears in the recorded marriage of both priests and apostles, and in the general commendation of marriage as a divinely ordained condition within the church; or the strong natural presumption in favor of the married state as being in general most conducive to health and happiness, growth and usefulness; we may now turn to consider the second main topic in this very practical chapter—the topic of *Divorce*, or the dissolution of the marriage contract and relation by some competent authority.* What is contemplated here is not a partial divorce or separation a mensa et toro, but a complete divorce—a final separation a vinculo. Here it should be observed at the outset that no voluntary agreement by the original parties, or any mere separation one from the other however deliberate or prolonged, can legitimately effect such dissolution. There was indeed an arbitrary power exercised in some instances by husbands during the patriarchal period, and an approach to such personal assumption among the Hebrews, even in the age of Christ; but no form of private divorce is admissible in the Christian dispensation. In the language of the sixth section, the persons concerned are not left *to their own wills and discretion in the case;* and the reason given is that the corruption of man is so great that, left to himself, he would be *apt to study*

*It is a fact of some interest that the two sections treating of this subject, and also the clause in the fourth section prescribing the limitations of marriage, were stricken out by Parliament, when the Confession was formally presented to that body for approval, and never received its endorsement.

arguments to put asunder unduly those whom God hath joined together in marriage. *A public and orderly course of proceeding* is, it is said, to be observed in every case ; the parties cannot be freed from their union otherwise.

In the absolute sense, God alone can absolve such parties from their solemn vows or promissory oaths made in his presence, or determine upon what conditions such absolution may occur. But so far as the parties are members of the Christian church, that organization by its proper representatives and in its own prescribed mode of procedure, may act as judge in determining whether sufficient reasons for divorce exist. And since marriage is a civil contract also,—a contract in which the interests of government and society are involved in any proposed abrogation of a covenant which the state has once assisted in establishing,—the civil magistracy may also sit in judgment upon the issue joined, and may even become so far as society is concerned the final arbiter in the case. It should be observed here that these two courts of adjudication may not agree in their determinations, and must be in large degree independent in their action. The church cannot annul the civil contract : the state alone can dissolve the bond which the state has established. The church cannot dictate law in the case to the state, or require the civil authorities to fall in with its opinions or decisions. Nor can the state compel the church to accept its conclusions respecting the validity and equity of a civil divorcement, or require the church to follow the civil verdict with similar action within its own sphere. The state may grant divorce on grounds which the church cannot approve or endorse, and the parties may therefore stand as divorced in the eye of the civil law, while in the judgment of the church they are still married, and are sacredly bound to fulfill all the obligations and duties involved in the married state.

The inquiry as to the legitimate grounds for divorce is therefore one of most serious moment. A very strong presumption against such legitimacy on any ground is derived from what we have already learned respecting the nature and sacredness of the marriage relation : if any such grounds exist, the evidence in their favor should be clear, marked, conclusive. The Confession names one ground on which ecclesiastical and civil courts are universally agreed—the fact of adultery by either party, not merely alleged but duly established. Here the authority of the seventh commandment, regarded not merely as a Jewish law but as a mandate of universal obligation—a mandate recognized in essence even among pagan peoples, and viewed as imperative in all

Christian lands—must be accepted as sufficient and decisive. In the case of *adultery after marriage*, it is declared in this chapter to be lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, before a civil or an ecclesiastical tribunal, or both, and it is added that after a divorcement is secured on this ground, the innocent party may marry another as if the offending party were dead. It is also said that *adultery or fornication* committed by one of the parties after a contract or engagement of marriage has been formed, *when detected before marriage* has actually taken place, constitutes for the same reason sufficient ground for annulling such contract or engagement,—thus releasing altogether the innocent party from the covenant once made. It should be added that the course here described as to married persons is not compulsory in such a sense and degree that the separation must imperatively take place, or that the court concerned must by some form of coercion compel such separation. For it is possible to suppose that, flagrant as the offence in question must always be, there may still be considerations in any given case of such importance, such as the necessities of dependent children, or the penitence of the offender, or certain extenuating circumstances in the transaction, as would justify the condoning of the offence, and the forgiveness of the transgressor. But the reason here named is always sufficient: adultery as an act is itself an abrogation of the sacred contract binding the parties together, and therefore de facto and de jure it works a dissolution of that contract.

A second ground of divorce which is generally recognized by both ecclesiastical and legal tribunals as sufficient, is described in section sixth, as such *willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the church or the civil magistrate.* Here serious diversities of judgment exist as to what constitutes willful desertion: statute laws and court decisions vary widely; very inadequate emphasis is sometimes laid upon the phrase; the absence of one of the parties may be the result of agreement or connivance, or merely a shift made in order to secure liberty to form a second matrimonial connection; and civil tribunals are sometimes grossly culpable in granting decrees of divorce on this general ground, when the facts in sight warrant no such decision. At the same time it is but just, in the light of Scripture and in the judgment of the Christian church generally, that willful desertion in the full and weighty sense of that phrase—the voluntary and permanent abandonment of one party by the other, involving as it must the continuous failure to discharge the duties once acknowledged and assumed in the marriage covenant—should stand by the side

of adultery itself as a reasonable ground of divorcement. The Assembly during the discussion on this subject defined its own view in the specialized proposition that, if either of the married persons forsake their yoke fellow, and by no means that can be used by the party forsaken or friends or magistrate will be reduced, after sufficient time, set down by the magistrate and made known to the party that so desireth, it is lawful for the innocent party to marry another: Minutes, 280. Such desertion is now recognized as in fact a forcible annulling of the covenant by the absent party, and is even—as it has been described—a species of constructive adultery, for which the innocent party thus abandoned has an inherent right to all the relief which human courts civil or ecclesiastical can equitably give.

Beyond this point civil and ecclesiastical opinion and usage vary widely. In fact the Christian church admits in general no other legitimate and adequate grounds for divorce than the two just named, while human law and court decisions in different states and countries recognize many other grounds of action, some of them obviously weak and insufficient: absence for brief periods, imprisonment for crime, disagreement in domestic policy, diversity of interest, failure to provide, incompatibility of temper, sudden quarrel, offensive habits, habitual intemperance, physical impotency, insanity, cruelty of disposition, harsh treatment, rude language, and a multitude of other relatively trivial and inadequate reasons or excuses. It is a lamentable fact that in Great Britain and in other countries of Europe, and especially in some of the United States, civil divorcement on such illicit grounds has become prevalent to an extent that is not only unscriptural, but grossly immoral, and highly injurious in many ways to the good order and welfare of society. So careful and just an authority as President Woolsey (Divorce and Divorce Legislation) has shown conclusively that the divorce laws in several of these States are shamefully lax and inadequate, and has made it evident to all candid minds that these commonwealths are in practical danger of becoming, as he states it, teachers and propagators of low views on the whole subject of marriage. In support of this statement he has cited in brief the downward progress in legislation, the rapid multiplying of alleged causes for divorce, the startling increase in the ratio of divorces to marriages, and the extensive degeneration of morals and the vast domestic and social miseries consequent upon such mischievous legislation.

While President Woolsey has clearly shown that there is urgent reason for thorough reform in both law and practice respecting

divorce, he has also wisely said that the leadership in such reform pertains of right to the Christian church. To the honor of Roman Catholicism it should be admitted that, as a result partly of its dogma that marriage is one of the appointed sacraments of religion, a positive gift of grace and consequently in its nature indissoluble, and partly for other reasons, the church of Rome holds high ground, higher even than some Protestant communions, on this whole subject. The Anglican communion both in Britain and in the United States has also taken important action in defense of the biblical rule, and in protest against miscellaneous divorcement. Increasing interest in the subject and a growing determination to resist the loose theories and looser practice current within the civil sphere, are becoming apparent in other denominaitons. American Presbyterianism has repeatedly expressed through its highest judicatory (Digest, 1898, p. 99) its opposition to divorce on other than biblical grounds, and its regret at the prevalence in many parts of the country of unscriptural views of the marriage relation, and at the growing disregard of the obligations imposed by that relation, and the frequent separations and divorces for slight and unwarrantable reasons. What is needful everywhere in both church and state is a more profound and effectual recognition of the fact that marriage, at least in the Christian sense, is not a contract merely, but a relationship, founded in the divine ordinance and in the human constitution, and sanctified by the deepest convictions of men in all Christian countries—a relationship fraught with permanent consequences in respect to temporal interests, especially within the home, and in the care and training of the offspring of marriage, and therefore dissoluble only when it has been made void through the adulterous life of one of the parties, or in other ways worthy of equal reprobation. The Christian Church at least can do nothing else than to stand firmly on the strong foundation of Scripture, approving marriage and pronouncing upon it, wherever worthily entered into, its holy benediction; and protesting against and in every practicable way resisting all forms of divorcement which are in letter or spirit contrary to the Word of God.

It is not possible here to enter into the discussion of many questions which may arise in connection with this subject. It is a practical inquiry whether separation a mensa et toro, if prolonged by choice, should be permitted to continue without interposition by the church,—whether church judicatories should acquiesce in the decisions of civil courts granting divorce on other than biblical grounds,—whether ecclesiastical authority should be exercised in

such cases to compel obedience to the obligations of the marriage contract or to punish their violation. It is also a practical question whether a person divorced by the act of the other party, and on other than biblical grounds, is still entitled as before to church privileges,—whether such person is at liberty, being blameless, to marry again,—whether the offending person may marry after divorce has been granted, and the person sinned against has been set free from the marriage vow,—whether a minister may officiate at marriages of this sort or countenance them. On such specific queries there is considerable variation of judgment among both individuals and churches. It is probable that no fixed rule can be laid down which would equitably meet all the particular cases occurring, especially in view of the wide variety of opinion and action in various states and countries. The general principles involved are sufficiently clear, and the mind and conscience of the common Christianity may be trusted to make all needful application.

11. Christianity and the State: mutual duties.

At the close of this survey of the teachings of this chapter, and of so much in other parts of the Confession and in the subordinate Symbols as bears upon the civil relations and duties of Christians and of the church, it will be well to emphasize the fact that during the long period since these Symbols were written, and especially in our own country, such relations and duties, instead of declining in importance, have assumed even greater significance and were never more momentous or solemn than now. Though we are not called to struggle as the divines of Westminster and the Independent party of Milton and Cromwell struggled, for due recognition of the plain truth that God alone is Lord of the conscience, yet true liberty of conscience is still by no means free from peril in new and perhaps equally dangerous forms, and must therefore be asserted and defended with an earnestness and courage in no degree less than that which led some of these men to prison and even to death in its behalf. Though the state, as we know it and live under its aegis, is another and very different institution from the England of the era of the Long Parliament, yet now as then civil government is to be regarded as an ordinance of God for his own glory and the public good, and as such has an unabated right to the support of all Christian citizens, even when it wields the power of the sword to maintain its own existence, or for the defense and encouragement of the good and the punishment

of them that do evil within its domain. Though we are in no apparent danger of suffering from the assumed right of the state to dictate systems of doctrine or forms of order and worship for the regulation of the church, or on the other hand from the effort of any church or sect to exercise jurisdiction in civil affairs, yet we may neither forget at what great cost the present balance and adjustment between these two primal institutions of human society has been won, nor neglect the constant and the inalienable duty of watchfulness lest what we possess should be disturbed or impaired on either side. Though the significance of the oath as a test of loyalty or a protest against tyranny, or as a sign of conformity to the prescripts of an established church, has passed measurably away, yet the oath as an attestation in the presence of God to the truthfulness of our testimony and our word, remains an observance of inestimable value, and one which ought to be required and exercised as a religious act. The pious vow, though no longer required in any sacerdotal sense, is still a privilege, if not a duty, laid upon the heart and conscience of each believer. So marriage is as sacred a covenant and relation now as when these Symbols were written, and is even more exposed to the assaults of wicked men and to corrupt social usages, and must therefore like the Sabbath and other kindred institutes of our holy religion, be defended and preserved by every resource within our reach,—the law of Christ determining alike our view of it and our opposition to whatever loose principle or practice may seem to be subverting it. In all such directions it is our duty as Christian men, and as well the duty of the Christian church of whatever name, to stand firmly by that inheritance of liberty and of righteousness within the civil sphere which we have received from a devout and heroic ancestry.

The general connections of Christianity and the Christian church, with civil society and with human states, were never so intimate, so complex, so interesting and vital as now. The limitations imposed by these studies permit only the briefest allusion to this very broad and practical subject. We may see at a glance that there is much which society and the state may do, and ought to do, in furtherance of our holy faith. Civil protection and civil support may justly be granted to the Christian church in all available ways, such as the guardianship of ecclesiastical organizations in the exercise of their legitimate rights, the exemption from taxation of property devoted to the cause of religion, the preservation of the Sabbath, peaceable assembling for religious worship, the enforcement of law in the interest of piety and morality,

the requisition of the oath in civil tribunals, the prohibition of blasphemy and profanity as injurious to the moral welfare of society. Civil government in this age of the world cannot regard Christianity and atheism with equal favor, since Christianity is always the sure and strong ally of just government, while atheism in all its forms tends always to anarchy and to the destruction of organized society. Regarded simply as a beneficent organization, unselfishly maintained for the inculcation of sound morals, the enforcement of mutual duties and the preservation of the mutual welfare of men, the Christian church has a claim to support and protection, privilege and immunity, which no worthy state can or will refuse to recognize.

On the other hand, we may at a glance discern far greater services which the church may render to the state and to human society. Our holy faith is more and more perceived to be the strongest, most pervasive and enduring factor in the elevation, the support, the practical direction and inspiration of human government. While Christianity has its own sphere and functions with which the state may not intermeddle—a sacred imperium in imperio within which no sovereign but Christ may rule—it enters by divine design and authority into the civil and social sphere at a thousand points as an exalting and sanctifying power, affecting legislation, influencing judiciary, animating administration, and in multiplied ways lifting the state and society into nobler quality and a worthier and more beneficent experience. So far as the present world is concerned, the ultimate aim of Christianity as a religion, and of the church as an institution, is nothing less than the establishment of the Kingdom of God among men, as the supreme fact in human life. And in securing that transcendent end it is the mission of Christianity and the church, not only to renew the individual man, but to regenerate human society also,—to bring all governments, states, civilizations, to their highest possible level by bringing them into due subordination to that august Kingdom of grace which is the final antecedent and precursor to the Kingdom of glory.

LECTURE TWELFTH—THE CHURCH OF GOD.

CHURCH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE: COMMUNION OF SAINTS: CONSTITUTION AND MEMBERSHIP: OFFICERS AND GOVERNMENT: DENOMINATIONS: CHURCH COUNCILS: PRESBYTERIANISM: HEADSHIP OF CHRIST: CHURCH GROWTH.

C. F. CH. XXV: XXVI: XXX: XXXI. L. C. 62–65; 190–192. FORM OF GOV. CH. I–III, VIII. BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, CH. I. DIRECT. FOR WORSHIP, CH. X–XI.

Thus far in these studies we have meditated upon our Holy Faith as it has revealed itself in the person of Christ the Savior, and in the process and experience of personal salvation in and through him. We have contemplated the Christian man as sanctified through grace and guided by the Spirit into various spheres of duty and service, in happy obedience to the divine law. But Christianity is in its nature a social as well as personal religion; it has a gracious mission to mankind as associated in the family and the state: it is a part of its restorative work to regenerate human society, and to bring the race as well as the individual into loyal obedience to God in Christ. And the agency through which chiefly it accomplishes this social mission and work is the Church,—the Church as an essential constituent in the divine plan of salvation from the first, and as an institution enduring as the family, more permanent and more vital to man even than the state,—an organism supernaturally fitted to do a work which the individual Christian could never do, and to maintain the honor of God and the perpetuity of revealed religion, as no other instrumentality could possibly maintain them. Here, in the possession of such an agency, Christianity manifests its incalculable superiority to all the natural faiths of the world, and here, in the weighty powers vested in the Church and in the grand commission given it, may be read the assurance that Christianity shall yet become the universal religion of mankind.

The prominence which the doctrine of the Church held in the estimation of the Westminster divines is illustrated, not only by the fact that a very large proportion of their time was given to the subject in its various aspects, but by the special fact that no

less than seven of the thirty-three chapters in the Confession, and nearly one sixth in bulk of the entire formulary, and a still larger proportion (if worship be included) in the two Catechisms, are devoted to its exposition. And if to this there be added the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Book of Discipline, which are concerned chiefly with the constitution and proper administration of the Church, this prominence becomes still more apparent. What we have already learned respecting the peculiar position of the Assembly, as the representative agent of British Presbyterianism in its struggle to become the national Church of Britain, will sufficiently explain the elaborateness and the emphasis of its teaching on this subject.—In taking up the theme thus presented, it will be of advantage to postpone for future consideration the chapters (XXVII–XXIX, and part of XXI) which treat of the sacraments and means of grace and worship, and to confine attention to the four chapters (XXV–VI: XXX–XXXI) which bring into view the Church itself, its material, organization, and authority as a divine institution.

1. Protestant doctrine of the Church. Papal error: Signs of the True Church.

It will enhance our estimate of the importance of the doctrine thus extensively presented in the Symbols, if we glance at the prominence given to the Church, in the several aspects just named, in the symbolism of the Reformation generally. The Council of Trent did not take up the doctrine of the Church for specific consideration, but contented itself with an exposition of the sacraments major and minor, and of the priestly orders and the hierarchy. Yet there is assumed throughout its decrees and canons that unbiblical and corrupting conception of the Church as the one only inspired, infallible, authoritative representative through the papacy, of Christ and his grace among men, against which the Reformers one and all so earnestly protested. What the papal doctrine was, and still is, may be seen in the Syllabus Errorum, in the extensive paragraphs (V–VI) which treat of the Church and its rights, and of its relations to civil society. It cannot be said that Protestantism, in its opposition to the papal dogma, was always clear or always consistent in its antithetic teaching. Numerous questions arose among the Reformers in regard to the type of church organization which should be substituted for that of Rome, to the jurisdiction and the proper prerogatives of such organization, to the kind and measure of authority vested in its officers, and many other associated matters. These questions could not, in the stress and struggle of the times, be answered in a moment, and the

Protestant cause suffered incalculably from this inability. The criticisms and taunts of the defenders of the papal dogma could not be fully met by a Protestantism divided and to some extent discordant at these important points. Nor indeed have divisions and discord ceased wholly even to this hour. The problem of the Church is still largely an unsolved problem; questions of organization, jurisdiction, authority, are still springing up on many sides to agitate Protestant churches, and to damage those supreme interests of spiritual Christianity which these churches together represent.

Still the creeds of the Reformation, both Lutheran and Reformed, abound in illustrations of the fact that Protestantism was from the beginning profoundly interested in the doctrine. The Augsburg Confession here, as at so many other points, strikes the note to which the subsequent Confessions respond, in its affirmation (VII) that there is but one holy Church which is to continue forever,—that this Church is the congregation of saints or of believers,—and that it may be known by the fact that the Gospel is rightly taught or preached in it, and the Christian sacraments are rightly administered. Luther in his Catechism substitutes the word, Christian, for the historic word, catholic, as it appears in the three ancient creeds, but affirms in general the teaching of Augsburg. The Formula of Concord, without attempting a direct definition, carries the same general doctrine throughout its discussion of certain particular truths, such as the ceremonies of the true religion, in opposition to the papacy on one side and to anabaptism and kindred heresies on the other. Zwingli declares that the truly catholic Church, the spouse of Christ, is the communion of such as are saints, and with democratic fervor affirms that all Christians are brethren of Christ, and therefore brethren among themselves,—meanwhile insisting earnestly that the hierarchy of Rome has no warrant whatever in holy Scripture. The Theses of Berne, a minor Swiss creed which strongly illustrates the influence of Zwingli and other Swiss leaders, declares that the holy Christian Church is born of the Word of God, makes no laws or commandments contrary to that Word, sets aside all merely human traditions, and listens not to the voice of strangers. The First Helvetic Confession, like the Formula of Concord, presents no formal definition, but assumes apparently the correctness of the general Protestant teaching on the subject. But the Second Helvetic here as often elsewhere is much more specific in its Article (XVII) on the Catholic and Holy Church of God: declaring that there always was, is now, and to the end

of time shall be, a Church or assembly of believers called and gathered from the world, who know and worship the true God in Christ, our Savior, and by faith partake of all the benefits freely offered through him,—that there needs to be but one such Church, catholic or universal, spread through the whole earth and enduring through all ages,—that this Church can have no other head than Christ, all other headship such as that of Rome being a tyrannical usurpation,—and that this one Church may properly be divided into particular churches,—parties and divisions that are destructive of the true unity, being guarded against; God also overruling these when they occur, for his own glory and for the illustration of truth.

It is hardly needful to quote the teaching of the later continental symbols; the French and the Belgic and others being in substantial harmony with the doctrine enunciated in the Second Helvetic creed, or scarcely going beyond it. The interesting fact may be mentioned that the first of these, while affirming that there can be no church where the Word of God is not received and submitted to, and on this ground condemning the papal assemblies, as the church of Rome is styled, still admits (XXVIII) that some trace of the true church is left in the papal communion, inasmuch as the virtue and substance of baptism have been retained in it. The Scotch Confession contains two somewhat elaborate articles (XVI and XVIII) on the Kirk, and on the Notes and Signs by which the true Kirk may be discerned from the false,—articles in connection with which the terrific arraignment and condemnation of the church of Rome in the Second Confession, or National Covenant, should be read by way of comment. Three of the Thirty-Nine Articles (XIX–XXI) discuss the doctrine, and with greater coolness and discrimination: affirming on one side that the visible church is a congregation of faithful men in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly ministered, in all those things that are requisite to the same,—this church having authority to decree other rites and ceremonies: but on the other side strongly declaring with Saxon positiveness that, although this church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, it may not ordain any thing that is contrary to the Word of God written, or decree anything beside or beyond the same as a matter of belief necessary to salvation—such things having neither strength nor authority unless it may be declared that they be taken out of the Holy Scripture.*

*Barclay in his Apology (Prop. X: 3) representing the view of the disciples of George Fox, omits the administration of the sacraments and also

On the general question suggested by this survey of the Protestant formularies, as to the signs or marks by which the true Church may be distinguished from all false or corrupted organizations claiming that name, an interesting discussion arose during the first decade of the Reformation which continued through the next century, and which in modified form is still continued. The papal answer included four visible and essential elements,—apostolicity, or the headship of the Roman pontiff, oneness and infallibility in faith, authoritative observance of the sacraments, and (secondarily) a geographic center and an ecumenical jurisdiction. Winer (Comparative View of Creeds) states that the Romanists define the Church as the fellowship of those baptized into Christ,—a fellowship founded upon earth by Christ under his representative, the pope, as its visible head. Bellarmine gives the three notes, true profession of faith, communion in the sacraments, and submission to the legitimate pastor, the Roman pontiff. In this view the Church is regarded as a visible society, having certain divine attributes and prerogatives, and endowed with saving grace, with which there must be personal union in order to salvation. It is therefore externally, visibly, and continuously, one and catholic or universal as the world in its dominion.

Protestantism on the other hand was constrained by its extensive distribution into civic, provincial, national churches throughout northern Europe and in the British Isles to emphasize the position that the true Church is indeed one but invisible as one, and that all these visible communions, separated by many geographic and political lines, are coequal parts of that one invisible Church. It was constrained also to substitute for the notes or signs emphasized by the advocates of Rome three simple but indispensable marks, belief in the Gospel, preaching of the Word, and due administration of the sacraments. The quotations from its symbols already given sufficiently illustrate the general doctrine in which all were agreed: wherever these three signs appeared, there they were ready to recognize a true church of Christ. The Belgic Confession speaks for all in its statement

the official preaching of the Word, and defines the Church as simply a company of persons who have been led to believe the principles and doctrines of Christianity, and who being united in love and experience, assemble together to wait on God and worship him, to bear testimony for the truth, and to instruct and care for one another, according to their several measures and attainments. In wide contrast with this statement is the formal declaration of Greek Christianity: The Church is a divinely instituted community of men, united by the orthodox faith, the law of God, the hierarchy and the sacraments.

that the marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the Gospel is preached therein, if it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ, if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin: in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church. Though there were differences among the Reformers as to what belief in the Gospel signified or implied, and to the real signification of the sacraments, especially that of the holy supper, they were so conscious of oneness in spiritual experience and of the substantial oneness of the great interest for which they were all battling, that they were ready to minimize all such differences, and to join hands in covenant over their broader and deeper agreements. Such conscious unity was on one side a natural result of their strong belief in the doctrine of justification by faith, and their uncompromising acceptance of this truth as the foundation of their religious hope: on the other side it came from their joint struggle with their papal adversaries, and from the firm conviction that, unless they could thus stand together on the basis of their united connection with the one great Church Invisible, they and their doctrine must soon perish together.

Augustine had stated the doctrine of the Church of God as invisible, as comprising the people of God throughout all nations, all saints being joined and thereunto numbered who lived in this world even before the coming of Christ, so believing that he would come, even as we believe that he hath come. But it was Calvin to whom especially Protestantism owes the distinction between the Church visible and the Church invisible, with which the Westminster Confession introduces its exposition of the whole subject. Calvin defined the Church (Inst. B. IV: 1) as the whole multitude dispersed all over the world, who profess to worship one God and Jesus Christ, who are initiated into his faith by baptism, who testify their unity in true doctrine and charity by a participation of the sacred supper, who consent to the Word of the Lord, and preserve the ministry which Christ has instituted for the purpose of preaching it. He proceeds to say that in this universal Church are comprehended particular churches distributed according to human necessity in various towns and villages, and that each of these respectively is justly distinguished by the name and authority of a church. He emphasizes over and over the two great marks, the faithful preaching of the Word and the right ministration of the sacraments; asserts that wherever these

are, the fruits of true piety will certainly be produced ; and declares, doubtless with reference to the diversities of opinion then current within Protestant circles, that no society in which these fruits abound, ought ever to be rejected or even challenged, though it might be chargeable with many faults. He exhorts to patience with imperfections and considerateness even toward error, warns against undue zeal for righteousness and the Donatistic demand for complete holiness within the household of faith, and avers that each true church will be known everywhere by its illustration of the gentle and loving temper of Christ and of Paul, the patient apostle. It is needless to describe further his position and teaching. Those who are accustomed to regard that great leader of the Protestant host as a narrow dogmatist, unwilling to yield his own convictions to any stress of argument or any pressure of holy charity, might gain a more just view of him if they would but read with care and candor what he has thus written. If the lofty conception of the one true Church of Christ, catholic and invisible in form, but evermore one and indivisible in faith and life, has obtained a firm foothold among Protestants, the credit is due first of all, to the profound sage of Geneva.

2. Westminster statement: Church invisible and visible.

The exposition of the doctrine of the Church in the Westminster Symbols (Chap. XXV) commences with two important definitions. The first is a definition of the invisible Church, which is also called the catholic or universal Church, and which consists of none but elect and regenerate persons, and of all the regenerate, who through all the past, or at present, or through all the future, have been, are, or shall be saved through Christ, and of all these conceived of as gathered into one body, real though invisible, of which body Christ is the only and the perpetual head. The material of which this invisible body is composed, consists of none but those who, in the language of the Larger Catechism (65–6) *enjoy union and communion with Christ in grace and glory.* Their union in grace is said to lie in the fact that they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably joined to him as their head and husband—a conjunction which is said to be formed at the time of their effectual calling and conversion. The language carries us almost to the verge of that weird conception of a mystical union of natures—an organic unity of will and constitution, which has fascinated a certain class or type of minds at various periods in the development of spiritual Christianity. But the correction to that error appears in the following chapter, which affirms that the communion that saints have with

Christ *doth not make them in any wise partakers of the substance of his Godhead*, or to be equal with him in any respect,—a fancy which is justly pronounced *impious and blasphemous*. This gracious communion lies rather, it is said (69) in their justification and adoption and sanctification, and in all those selected benefits which come upon them as sharers in the virtue of his mediation. Thus defined and limited, the invisible Church presents itself to our view as the grandest conception of human fellowship in one holy organism which it is possible for the mind of man to frame—an organism which though invisible is yet more real and potent than the strongest earthly empire, and which extends over all lands and oceans, and finds its hallowed material on every continent and every island of earth.

The second definition is that of the visible Church, also viewed as catholic and universal, which is said to consist of all those who openly profess the true religion, together with their children,—not a national church like the Hebraic, constituted under the Mosaic law, but an organization which knows no boundary of race or country, and which finds its membership wherever men are ready to affirm their allegiance to Christ, and to enter into organic union with his avowed followers. The qualification for such visible membership lies not in any natural endowment or peculiarity but in the voluntary profession of the Christian faith, and the public covenant to live in obedience to the Christian rule. It is not to be presumed that such connection is always the same thing as membership in the invisible Church, since the profession and covenant may not in every case represent, though they may be presumed generally to represent, such holy and blessed union with Christ himself. The visible Church, as thus constituted of professing believers, is further said to be the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world: no other conception of a divine kingdom established or to be established in the world, apart from the Church visible and invisible, or consequent upon it, is mentioned in the Symbols. This Church is also called, in the phrase of Scripture, the house and family of God on earth—the brotherhood of believers. As such it is entirely oblivious of all those distinctions of capacity, endowment, possessions, position or influence among men, which reveal themselves more or less prominently in all the natural fellowships and unions of human life. Within its sacred circle there is no room for any racial or political or social or personal differentiations. Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free, male and female, make one and the same profession, and in virtue of that one profession stand together on

a common level as to mutual right and privilege. It is also noticeable that children are here counted as members of the visible Church in virtue, not of their own personal profession which they are incompetent to make, but of the profession and covenant made by their parents, and of whose privileges they are, under the law of nature which makes the family organically one, permitted to share. This feature will come again into view, in connection with the matter of church membership and of infant baptism : here it is needful only to note its introduction.

One affirmation in this definition demands special notice,—the statement that outside of this visible Church *there is no ordinary possibility of salvation*. Similar statements, in some cases much less guarded, appear in several of the earlier symbols. The Augsburg Conf. declares that the promise of salvation is not given to those who are outside of the church of Christ : the Second Helv. that, as there was no safety outside of the ark of Noah, so there is none outside of Christ, and those who wish to have life in him must not live in separation from his true church : the Belgic, quoting from Cyprian, extra ecclesiam nulla sit salus : and the Scotch Conf : Out of the Kirk there is neither life nor eternal felicity. In the light of such sweeping affirmations the phrase, *no ordinary possibility*, seems considerate and mild indeed. How strictly is such a proposition to be construed? There have been periods in history, as during the pagan persecutions, when the visible church, in the sense here defined, could hardly be said to have had an existence, and when a public profession of faith in connection with that church, could not be made. It is also true that there are many in Christian lands who have never entered the visible church through this appointed gateway, but whom Christ nevertheless counts among the elect members of the church invisible. Instances sometimes arise in fact where such public profession, if not entirely impossible, is at least for a time impracticable or injudicious ; and others where spiritual ignorance or some misconception of duty may lead a real believer to the neglect of that open profession of allegiance which our Lord plainly requires. Justly construed, the clause in question leaves sufficient room for all that is thus extraordinary, without in the least compromising or lowering the force of the divine command. The Catechism indeed (113) places *making profession of religion in hypocrisy or for sinister ends*, among the sins forbidden in the second commandment ; and also (151) classes vows and promises and engagements to God, if made presumptuously or willfully, among the offences which are especially heinous in his sight.

Yet on the other hand, the refusal to profess religion, not merely in the way of formal covenant with the people of God in his visible household, but no less in all other ways in which we can show forth our belief in his grace and our desire to obey his law and be called by his name, is beyond doubt a grievous sin in his sight—a sin which may be condoned only by the presence of extraordinary hindrance or of circumstantial impossibility. Not only Christ but his organized church has the right to expect such profession, and even in his name to demand it, as a duty, clear, personal and imperative wherever compliance is practicable.

It is not to be inferred from these descriptions that the Church visible and the Church invisible are two Churches: in many particulars, as in their common headship, their regulative law, their inward temper, their final end and consummation, they are one Church manifesting itself in these differing aspects and relations. Yet neither are the distinctions in the case to be overlooked. The invisible Church extends to heaven as truly as to the present world, and reaches through all time past and future as well as present: the visible Church includes in its scope only the earth and the present hour. The first is without formal organization, held together by no bond but the bond of conscious union with Christ, and having no fellowship except that which is purely spiritual: the second is an organization, as palpable and distinct as the family or the state with which it is so often compared in the Pauline letters. The membership of the first is unknown to men, and its records are kept in heaven only: the membership of the second is enrolled in written books, and the names and characters are more or less fully known to the world. The first has no ministry or sacrament or ordinance distinctively: to the second, in the laguage of the third section, *Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God*, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints—gifts which are, it is added, *to be continued to the end of the world.* The full force of this statement can be felt only when we come to examine the teaching of the Symbols respecting the sacraments and means of grace, and the Christian ministry as a sacred order, created and maintained for the benefit of the visible, organized church. Yet it is important at this stage to note the fact that this church is not only an organism but an institution—an institution permanently established on the earth by divine authority, created to fulfill an appointed purpose, and divinely equipped with all the agencies and provisions needful for the accomplishment of that sublime purpose.

It should be noted further that, while Protestantism lifted up

in answer to the Roman challenge, the bright conception of the Church invisible in which all true saints have membership, and the kindred conception of the Church visible in which all particular organizations of professed disciples have a legitimate place, it also emphasized as strongly as Rome the truth that the visible Church, being thus one, has the whole earth for its domain, and as an institution is fully competent through grace to proclaim the Gospel to mankind, and to lead the whole race of man into obedience to Christ. In other words, the Reformers repudiated the assumptions of Catholicism as to its superior equipment, whether in belief or liturgy or apostolicity, for the accomplishing of these grand ends, and claimed for themselves the possession of the only instrumentalities that could succeed in such an undertaking. They believed in the superior effectiveness of the sincere and intelligent proclamation of the Gospel of salvation through faith only: they believed that the administration of the two sacraments as instituted by Christ, in the simple and spiritual way he had appointed, would have greater power over men than all the gorgeous show of the Roman mass: they believed that the ministry as appointed by him, seconded by the consecrated service of all believers, under the apostolic rule of brotherhood, would constitute a more effective spiritual agency than the Roman hierarchy could be. In a word they believed that the Christian Church, just as they had been taught to recognize it in the New Testament, was an organization better equipped in every particular than that which was represented by popes and cardinals and outward ceremonials at Rome. This Church needed no geographic center; its circumference was wide as the earth and as comprehensive as that humanity for whose redemption it had, as they believed, been instituted of God. And the history of Protestantism during these three centuries, notwithstanding all the schisms that have weakened it, the corruptions that have crept into it, and the pitiful lack of faith and charity and consecration which has so largely hindered its progress,—the history of Protestantism during this long period of testing and development has proved beyond question that the Reformers, not the Council of Trent, were right in their conception of the Church—one and catholic and apostolic—the living Church of the living God.

The generic conception of the Church thus presented in Protestant symbolism, and especially in the Westminster formularies, suggests at this point the underlying question whether the church as thus described is merely a human arrangement devised for

the furtherance of the cause of religion, or is an original and essential feature of the divine plan for the salvation of the race through the Gospel. It suggests also the further question whether, if the church be such an original and essential part of this divine plan, it was first established in conjunction with the advent of Christ and the pentecostal dispensation of the Spirit, or existed from the earliest ages; gradually unfolding itself historically in the world as the scheme of redemption was progressively disclosed from the original promise in Eden, on through the patriarchal and Hebraic dispensations, until it reached its culmination at the incarnation and Messiahship of our Lord.

3. The Church in the divine plan: its evolution, Patriarchal, Hebraic, Christian.

No intelligent student of Scripture can suppose that the Church is a human institution merely—a device of man, or a provision of the State, as Hobbes affirmed, invented in the interest of religion and as a help toward the maintenance of good order in human society. The New Testament, in both its historic and its preceptive sections, as much affirms the supernatural quality of the church, its origin in the divine purpose, its superhuman equipment and provisions, its celestial authority and its divinely ordained mission to the race,—as much as it affirms either the divine authorship of the Scriptures, or the true and proper divinity of our Lord himself. If the church is not a supernatural creation, Christianity is not a supernatural faith. It may be said further, that the church though supernatural lies constructively in the nature of man as a religious being, just as the family lies constructively in his domestic, or the state in his political nature and instincts. For it is not more true that the domestic instinct demands the family as its legitimate sphere of activity, or that the political instinct requires the state as its appointed arena of development, than it is that the religious nature needs and must have the church as the domain within which its spiritual energies may find appropriate play, and through which its noblest spiritual growth may be attained. As set forth in the Scriptures, the church has the appearance of having been divinely devised to meet this religious need; it has also justified itself abundantly, by actual experiment, as an indispensable adjunct to the right development of holy character both in the individual and within the organized family of grace.

It may be suggested further, that the diffusion and perpetuation of religion in the world, and the adequate manifestation of the divine grace and glory among men, require just such an

institution and agency. Believers die, and so far as they are concerned, apart from the fading memory of their faith and their works, religion on the earth dies with them. Generations of believers perish from among men, and their religious labors and influence in like manner rapidly fade away. It consequently becomes indispensable that our holy faith should be embodied in an enduring institution like the church—an institution which has a continuous life, and which therefore can maintain permanent, even indestructible position in the world. While the church thus exists, it may safely be prophesied that religion will survive through the ages. The church is also by its own nature a propagative as well as preservative agency, specially qualified and empowered to spread religion abroad in the world, as individual effort could never diffuse it. Its ordinances and worship, its creeds and testimonies, its associated vitality, its capacities for aggressive movement, all fit it peculiarly for such cosmic spread of the Gospel. And furthermore, God is glorified among men in and by his church as he could not be through the agency of the individual disciple, or even of the sanctified family. The testimony of the organized church to his Word, to his law, to his saving grace is more diffusive in quality, and more persuasive and potent in effect. There is an added strength, a reverberating conclusiveness in the combination of so many concurrent voices within this gracious organism, which the world cannot well refrain from hearing.

Thus recognizing the Church as a supernatural institution, having an indispensable office and service in conjunction with Christianity as a supernatural religion, we are prepared to consider in brief the second question proposed,—whether this institution was first established by Christ during his Messiahship, or may rather be traced backward to the very beginning of the scheme of redemption. The latter is unquestionably the biblical representation. The Second Helvetic Confession justly taught that, as God willed from the beginning that men should be saved, so from the necessity of the case the church existed from the beginning—there having been always a more or less visible household of faith among men. The Westminster Symbols bring out the doctrine more distinctly, though in somewhat scattered and fragmentary statements. In the chapter (VIII) on Christ as the Mediator it is affirmed that the church was an essential feature in the divine plan of grace; God the Father having made his Son the Head and Savior of this church, and having *given to him from all eternity a people*, to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified and glorified. In the chapter now specially under

notice (XXV) it is said that *there shall be always a church on earth* to worship God according to his will,—a proposition which implies that there was always such a church, existing from the earliest hour when that will began to be made known to men. In the opening sentence of the Confession it is said that it pleased the Lord at sundry times and in divers manners to reveal himself, and *to declare his will unto his church*, and afterwards for the establishment and comfort of the church to commit the same wholly unto writing—in other words, to provide the inspired Scriptures for its guidance. In the chapter on Providence (V) it is declared that God after a most special manner *taketh care of his church*, and disposeth all things to the good thereof; and in the Larger Catechism, (63) that he has protected and preserved the church in all ages. The church in the Hebraic era is quaintly described (Ch. XIX) as *a church under age*—in a state of tutelage, under ceremonial laws and typical ordinances, all prefiguring Christ and his matured church. In the Form of Gov. (Ch. II), it is said that *Christ hath erected in this world a kingdom which is his church*, and in the Larger Catechism (54) that he doth at all times gather and defend his church against all enemies.

Turning to the Bible for light, we discover at once three successive eras or dispensations in the life of the church, related to each other as the blade, the ear, and the full corn in the ear, in the parable of our Lord. Of these the first is the patriarchal era, ending with the formation of the Hebrew state, but extending backward, not merely to the call of Abraham, as is often affirmed, but to the ages before Abraham, to the period of the flood, and further still to the very dawn of the religious history of the race. It is impracticable here to detail the evidences found in Holy Writ, which justify the conclusion that, as there were pious households on the earth from the beginning, so the church in incipient forms lived within the family, generation after generation, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham. During the Abrahamic period, and down to the exodus from Egyptian bondage, we find still clearer signs that this supernatural institution was taking firmer and wider root in the earth, though it existed mostly, so far as the sacred records show us, within the pious household,—the Sabbath observed, sacrifices consecrated, divine law honored, prayer and praise offered, God adored in the families of Isaac and Jacob, and in many a humble home among their descendants, living as slaves and exiles far from their ancestral land.

Passing into the second or Hebraic era, we discover at once

various evidences of the existence of that *church under age*, as the Confession aptly styles it, which was to be a precursor of the consummated church afterwards organized by the hand of the incarnated Mediator. We discern at this point a marked enlargement in the amount and quality of religious truth possessed, a broader and more definite conception of divine law as set forth in the Ten Commandments, a more elaborate and significant ritual, together with an emphasized obligation to observe the Sabbath and to count the tabernacle or sanctuary a sacred place, a more fully regulated and trained priesthood, and further endorsement of the churchly as well as national seal of circumcision. These vast changes were sufficient of themselves to constitute a new era, a new dispensation, in the life of the church as well as of the Hebrew state. There were resemblances enough remaining to make it obvious that this was not another, but rather an evolved and expanded church,—adjusted in its scope and appointments to the new conditions on which the Jewish nation was about to enter. The church and the state still remained in vital intimacy, as the church and the family had previously existed, and God still ruled theoretically in both, as he had from the beginning ruled within the pious household. Yet a remarkable transition was introduced—a transition which was continued for sixteen centuries, with many successive stages and developments, through the several cycles first of the judges, then of the kings, and finally of the prophets, until the fullness of the time when a still grander transition should take place.

The Christian Church is never to be contemplated as another and independent organization: such a conception severs at a stroke the vital ties which bind the Old Testament and the New into living unity, robs prophecy of all significance, and renders the divine dealing with mankind prior to the incarnation an inexplicable mystery. The transition is indeed more marked—the evolution more broad and impressive. In some respects the change seems also as silent as the movement from early dawn to the full and perfect day. Neither our Lord nor his apostles were inclined to hasten its quiet progress, or formally to set it up at once on that throne of cosmic supremacy which it was destined to occupy. Yet the comprehensive change came, as an inevitable consequence of the coming of the Messiah himself. The types and ceremonies were all consummated in him, and therefore ceremony and type came to an end. He being the universal priest, having in himself the power of an endless life, the order of priesthood was forever abolished. The Commandments became now a

spiritual law, filling all the life with its presence, and ruling with holy sway through all the soul. The old national lines were obliterated, and the church, freed from its connection with the Jewish state, became the church of humanity, having the whole earth as its predestined domain. Yet all that rendered either the Abrahamic or the Mosaic church valuable as modes of holy living and holy culture remained: the points of identity were still carefully preserved: and therefore in the new we see the old living again, though with marvelous additions in strength and beauty and effectiveness.

Such briefly stated is that conception of the Church of God as originally formed in the divine plan, and as like the Gospel itself progressively unfolded in history, which the Symbols in rather fragmentary method commend to our belief. No other Protestant formulary contains such a doctrine in anything like equal fullness. The careful study of the conception as thus presented cannot fail to be of unspeakable value to the student; revealing to him the true relationship of much that must otherwise seem disjointed or extraneous, giving new meaning to the older Scriptures at many points, and binding the Old Testament and the New—the complex aggregate of type and ritual, story and psalm, prophecy and praise, law and doctrine, hope and realization—into a superhuman and sublime unity. In these confessional studies such a conception is well-nigh indispensable to right or appreciative views of the Christian Church as we have seen it described in the Protestant symbolism, and as we shall have occasion to contemplate it hereafter more in detail.

4. Communion of Saints: its extent and nature.

Before proceeding to the consideration of the particular church as a representative form of the comprehensive organism now described, it will be well to pause for a moment in contemplation of the suggestive chapter (XXVI) which treats of the *Communion of Saints*—the only chapter on the subject in the whole range of Christian symbolism. Although the Assembly, as we have noted, did not rise in fact to the high level of its own teaching at this point, it may fairly be set down to its credit that at such a troublous period in Protestant history, especially in Britain, it should have drafted a chapter so full of the holiest temper of Christian catholicity. The phrase doubtless flowed over from the Apostolic Letters into the earliest of the creeds, where it took its place beside the doctrine of the Holy Ghost and the holy Catholic Church, and the three important tenets that follow in that

creed, as one of the fundamental *credenda* of our religion. It does not appear in either the Nicene or the Athanasian symbol, or in the current form of the earlier creed as recited by the Greek church. It can hardly be regarded as merely a later expansion of the antecedent phrase, the holy catholic church; or as pointing back to the first phrase in the sentence, I believe in the Holy Ghost; or as an echo of the apostolic benediction, in which communion with the Holy Ghost is associated with the love of God, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the crowning heritage and blessing of believers. It was doubtless formulated to express an additional truth, which had gradually made its way into the consciousness and heart of the church, during its long eras of fellowship in trial and persecution, and in conflict with heresy and unbelief. Since its introduction, probably during the sixth or seventh century (Schaff, Creeds, I : 54) it has been recognized by Protestants universally, though with variations in interpretation, as one of the fundamental, and in some aspects specially precious affirmations of our holy faith.

Moehler (Symbolism, 342) interprets the phrase as referring to the union subsisting between the saints on earth and the saints in glory, and on this ground justifies the dogma of the intercession of departed saints in our behalf, and affirms the duty and privilege of venerating or worshiping them, and invoking their aid in our endeavor to lead Christian lives. Pearson and also Leighton, in their expositions of the Creed, regard the phrase as affirming, in the language of the former, that the saints of God living in the church of Christ on earth are in communion still with all the saints departed out of this life, and admitted to the presence of God,—death not interrupting the spiritual fellowship already established here, in virtue of the mystical unity existing between all believers and Christ. Leighton goes still further,—declaring that while the saints on earth enjoy such communion one with another, they are also one city and one family with all those who have died in the faith and fear of God, and who in their state of glory still sympathize with the faithful below, assisting and comforting and praying for them. Pearson also regards the phrase as pointing likewise to the communion of each saint with the Deity, Father and Son and Holy Ghost, and as representing a species of union and fellowship maintained also with all the holy angels.

Whether it be or be not true that the saints in glory are still permitted to maintain in some manner inexplicable to us a species of communion with the saints on earth, interceding with God in their behalf, or assisting and comforting them by some form of

interposition, or in other mysterious ways influencing their lives in the interest of holiness, such propositions are not justified by this confessional phrase. The chapter we are considering limits the communion in question simply to the present life,—saying nothing as to the possible fellowship of saints on earth with the sanctified in heaven or with the holy angels or with God or the blessed Trinity. It simply affirms that in virtue of the mediation of Christ, and of the personal union established by faith with him as the Head, *all believers are in love united one to another*, and have each a rightful share in the gifts and graces of all the rest, and that each is therefore under obligation to all the rest, to render unto them as a matter of spiritual right whatever services may *conduce to their mutual good* both in the inward and outward man. In the Larger Catechism (63) such communion is put down as an inherent feature of the visible church, and as constituting one of the special privileges enjoyed by those who are in connection with the organized household of faith. It is not implied in this definition, as some have claimed, that this communion requires exact identity of belief, or exact unity in experience, or exact uniformity in government or worship or sacrament; union in, with and through Christ as the Head is its true ground and source.

The chapter proceeds to indicate three practical directions in which such communion within the visible Church may find expression: first, in community in *the worship of God*,—such worship being, according to the best Protestant conception, not an official performance by the priesthood or the ministry, but a service in which all believers may share, and to whose highest usefulness all are bound to contribute. A subsequent chapter (XXIX) speaks particularly of the sacramental supper, in which believers share together, as a special bond and pledge of their communion with Christ, as well as with each other. Secondly: in the form of *spiritual services*, wherein each seeks in all practicable ways to assist the rest in their struggles against sin, and their efforts after holiness,—by counsel, by example, by prayer for and with them, by sympathy in their griefs and temptations, and by brotherly encouragement helping them forward as fellow pilgrims on their way to the common heaven. No Christian can rightly be indifferent to the spiritual needs of the humblest or weakest of his brethren in Christ; passing by them on the other side under whatever impulse of pride or fear or selfishness, while he possesses the spiritual ability to aid them in the Christian life. And if, through his neglect of the culture of his own soul, he has failed to gain such spiritual ability, and has nothing to give to

other saints in their religious need, he so far forth even forfeits his own claim upon such communion in gifts and graces as they in turn may become able to confer.

Thirdly: in *relieving* the needs of the saints *in outward things*, according to the abilities and the necessities existing in the case. It is carefully said, by way of rebuke to a current error, that this communion doth not take away or infringe the title or property which each man hath in his own goods and possessions. The remarkable scene recorded in the earlier chapters of the Book of Acts is not to be taken as a rule for the church in all places and times: community of goods is not an indispensable condition of saintly communion, nor is communism in any form a legitimate feature of Christianity. Macpherson (Comm.) says justly that the communism of the Jerusalem church was only temporary; determined by local circumstances, and suited to the special condition existing, but never tried again even in the apostolic church. Yet the obligation of every believer to do all that he is able toward relieving the necessities of his brethren within the visible household of faith,—to aid them in their rightful undertakings, to assist them in their losses, to minister to them in their sickness or their poverty—is one which belongs to the very essence of our religion, and from which no one can claim exemption who is a true disciple of Him of whom it was prophetically said that He took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. While we are indeed bound to practice charity toward all men, in all the varied forms which universal brotherhood may require, such charity presents its highest claim—as Paul taught the Corinthian church—wherever those who dwell with us in the blessed communion of saintship need our help, whether in the inward or the outward man. It is within the household of faith that Christian love finds its sweetest, noblest manifestations.

One further element in the doctrine presents itself in the declaration that this communion is to be extended, so far as God gives opportunity, unto *all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus*. There can be no doubt that this is a legitimate expansion, as it is a world-wide application, of the obligation here defined. Whatever may or may not be realized as yet in fact, it still is true in principle that this communion of saints, contemplated as a gracious sentiment, knows no boundaries of creed or polity or worship—knows no geographic or other outward limitations. This is obvious from the nature of the sentiment, and from its source and ground, as seen in the underlying union of every genuine saint with Christ himself. Having fellowship with him,

deriving their common life from him, engaged alike in his one great vineyard, all saints of necessity have fellowship one with another—a fellowship as wide as the earth and enduring as time. This is indeed an ideal conception: we nowhere see such communion realized in fact. Christian catholicity is still the exception rather than the practical rule, even within the most spiritual circles of believers. We are compelled rather to confess that we see those whom we regard as alike disciples and followers of Christ, in a thousand ways breaking away from that beautiful unity which all profess when they recite the ancient creed. Presbyterianism itself has never been, is not now, entirely true to the noble doctrine which it was first among Protestant organizations to affirm. It is indeed to the credit of the Presbyterian Alliance, that it has placed in the preamble of its Constitution the statement that, in forming such an alliance of Presbyterian churches, the general principle maintained and taught in the Reformed Confessions, is still affirmed,—that the Church of God on earth, though composed of many members, is one body in the communion of the Holy Ghost, of which body Christ is the supreme Head and the Scriptures are alone the infallible Law. Similar movements among other evangelical communions toward confederation if not organic union on the basis of such recognized spiritual unity, are among the most encouraging signs of the times. Still there is little immediate prospect that anywhere in Protestant circles, and certainly not within the domain of Papacy, the prayer of our common Lord that all who are his shall be one—one in such impressive sense and measure that the whole world shall perceive it—will receive its due and blessed accomplishment.

5. Sects and denominations: how far justified.

The question whether sects or denominations may rightfully exist within the one Church of God on earth presses itself at this point upon our consideration. It is a question peculiar to Protestantism, and one which the advocates of the Papacy have persistently urged as not merely a problem to be solved, but also a palpable proof that Protestantism in its numerous varieties is a schismatic departure from the biblical ideal. It is also a question of less significance in Protestant countries where state churches are established, with consequent uniformity of an external or formal sort, than in countries like our own where Protestant sects may be counted by scores, each characterized by some specific peculiarities, but all having the same legal standing, and all soliciting adherence, sometimes with manifestations of

partisan zeal which are quite at variance with the doctrine of the brotherhood of all believers. As it thus presents itself, the question is not to be answered by assuming that any one among these sects alone possesses the biblical doctrine, or represents the biblical polity, or alone offers acceptable worship, or observes the sacraments according to the Scriptural rule. The jus divinum theory in whatever form, by whatever religious body urged, no longer commands the assent either of Christian scholarship, or of the popular judgment. And if any such denomination claims that its variety of worship or order or doctrine conforms more closely than those of any other to the teaching and the usages recorded in the Bible, it still must hold even this claim in due subordination to the fundamental doctrine of the communion of saints which all confess together. How then, under such conditions, can these denominational segregations be justified?

The Form of Government as drafted by the Assembly, following the state church theory, affirmed that the ordinary way of dividing Christians into distinct congregations, and the way most expedient for edification, is *by the respective bounds of their dwellings*,—this being pronounced most conducive to the convenient use of the ordinances, and most helpful in the discharge of those more private duties which Christians as brethren owe to one another. So far as we can discover, no other rule than that of such geographic subdivision was recognized in the apostolic church: there were in fact no Pauline or Petrine or Johannean churches as has been claimed, distinguishable from each other by doctrinal or ecclesiastical peculiarities. This geographic law is set forth in the American Form of Gov. also, in the statement (Ch. II) that as the immense multitude of professing believers with their children cannot meet together in one place, to hold communion or to worship God, it is reasonable and warranted by Scripture example that they should be *divided into many particular churches:* it being added, however, in accordance with the Presbyterian theory of church polity, that it is expedient and agreeable to Scripture, and the practice of the primitive Christians, that these particular churches when formed should be associated together organically, and be governed not only by congregational, but also by presbyterial and synodical assemblies.

But a more radical law of distribution reveals itself in many Protestant lands, and especially in our own, in the wide diversities existing as to polity, to doctrine, and to worship, including the sacraments. It would be impracticable here to describe these diversities in detail. There are in general three differing concep-

tions of church government, democratic and representative and hierarchal, with many varieties of combination,—three main types of doctrine, Lutheran and Calvinistic and Arminian, with still more numerous varieties, and more complex combinations,—and at least two generic modes of worship, the liturgical and its opposite, also with marked variations in tendency and practice. The advocates of these all agree that there should be government and doctrine and worship within the Christian church, but as to the form of government, the type of doctrine, the mode of worship, there are wide, sometimes even radical, diversities in judgment and usage. The causes of such variation may be easily traced. They are not to be found altogether or mainly, as is sometimes fancied, in unworthy incentives merely,—such as an inordinate zeal of opinion, or human ambition, or the passion of party bent on securing supremacy. They lie largely in temperament and taste, in early education, in domestic connections, in philosophic bias or training, in the usages of surrounding society, in civil government, and a multitude of other extraneous influences often unconsciously yet decisively affecting judgment, inclination, preference. Nor is it an error to suppose that there are complex and antithetic elements in Christianity itself, such as its mingled democratic and monarchal qualities, which furnish occasion for such differing conceptions of what the church ought to be in its organization, its belief, and its devotions. The significant fact in the case is that for reasons of one kind and another these variations have existed in all ages, at least since the Reformation, and so far as we can see, seem likely to exist for ages to come. Are they intrinsically schismatic and wrong?

Milton (True Religion) tersely defines schism as a rent or division made in the church whenever anybody on insufficient grounds (such as the name of place or a person) undertakes to set up a distinct faith or government. As in the epistle of Paul to the Corinthian saints, the term is generally used as descriptive of any movement to produce division in the church without adequate cause. Whenever Christian men on just grounds are constrained to withdraw from the communion or jurisdiction of any church, or are driven out by the action of an unjust or a bigoted majority, they are not to be regarded as schismatics. Real schism springs from other sources, and is actuated by a very different spirit and purpose. The schismatic temper may and does exist in wide varieties and in many degrees more or less culpable,—such as factional jealousy, denominational rivalry, church pride or bigotry, inordinate claims of supremacy, denying the

validity of the ministry or sacraments of other Christian churches. And wherever devotion to a specific doctrine or polity or variety of worship, or mode of administering the sacraments, brings about any violation of the cardinal law of spiritual unity—especially where the sectarian spirit, concentrated on minor issues, leads to the multiplying of congregations or sects without adequate reason, there open schism appears in all its deformity, and in every such manifestation it is obviously an offence against the Church catholic and a crime against Christ as its Head. Nor should it ever be forgotten that there is always serious danger, especially in a country and an age like ours, that denominational zeal, though it should not reach the point of sinful schism, may, if not sedulously watched, degenerate into a narrow and aggressive sectarianism, which is as truly as positive schism at variance with the biblical rule and with the confessional conception of the communion of saints.

On the other hand it should be admitted that the denominational spirit may not only exist in entire harmony with that fundamental conception, but may even become an efficient incitement and help in the upbuilding, through the joint action of many churches and parties, of the one catholic and apostolic Church. Intelligent and honest segregation on the basis of recognized differences in judgment and taste, or even in spiritual sentiment or experience, may not, often does not, involve any departure from the great law of Christian unity. It may rather be, sometimes has been, the case that this primal law receives most impressive illustration in and through such segregation. Those who are thus divided on the basis of healthful preference for doctrine or order or worship, may still be all the more conscious of the blessed oneness that holds them in unison around all that is vitally characteristic of the common Christianity. It is certainly a fact of history that denominational divisions, with the special activity and spirit of sacrifice which they tend to awaken, and through the varieties of adaptation in service which they develop, have often proved of signal value to the general cause. The popular comparison of these distributed varieties of organized Christianity to the divisions of an army moving by diverse processes and under different array toward a common consummation, is in substance accurate and just. Especially is this true in an irenic age like this, when the temper of sect is so obviously dying out, when the fundamental doctrine of the communion of saints is becoming so widely received and illustrated in experience, and when spiritual Protestantism is realizing more and more that interior unity

which is both the highest evidence of its divine quality, and the best assurance of its ultimate success in winning the world for Christ.

Descending from this general survey, we may now profitably turn to consider in several aspects the particular church or congregation of avowed believers,—defined in the Form of Gov. (Ch. II : iv) as consisting of a number of professing Christians, with their offspring, voluntarily associated together for divine worship and godly living, agreeably to the Scriptures, and submitting to a certain form of government. Such a church is an organized section or division of that Church Visible which is defined in the Larger Catechism (62) as a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion and of their children. It is always, first, a voluntary association,—its membership being brought together and held together, not by any external constraint such as the edict of the state, but of their own free election. It is always, secondly, an association based on the principle of piety,—the profession of such piety being the only condition requisite to admission, and the culture of piety, or godly living, being the prime reason for its existence. It is always, thirdly, an association or organization rather than a mere assemblage of believers—a permanent form of fellowship, with such a degree of government as is essential to its perpetuity and proper efficiency, so far as the ends of its existence are concerned. It is always, fourthly, an association based on the Scriptures as both furnishing its justifying foundation and containing the law according to which its fellowship and its activities are to be regulated. It is always, fifthly, an association for divine worship as well as godly living—a holy organism whose central function it is to bear testimony to the truth and grace of God as made known in the Gospel, and to adore and glorify him before men. In a word, it is an organization of those who profess to love God, and in the Christian dispensation of those who profess to love God as revealed in Christ, existing permanently under some prescribed constitution, written or understood, for the purpose of worshiping him, and of spreading abroad the saving knowledge of him in the earth. Such was in substance the constitution of the particular church, even while it existed constructively in the families of the patriarchs, and still more obviously as it existed within the sheltering limitations of the Hebrew state: such eminently are its

6. The Particular church: Constitution and membership: infant membership.

material, its fundamental principles, its bond and law of union, and its design or end under the Gospel.

The question of membership in the particular church is one of the gravest importance. The only admissible qualification for such membership, according to the general judgment of evangelical Protestantism, is personal piety credibly possessed and avowed. There can be no doubt that the recognized basis of such membership in the apostolic church was an open and authenticated belief in and acceptance of Jesus Christ as the appointed Messiah, the only Redeemer of men : on this basis Jew and Gentile, men and women of all races, classes, conditions, found welcome within that sacred fold. For some centuries this continued to be the single and simple qualification, until at length the severe pressure of persecution on one side and the development of worldliness and of hierarchal corruption on the other side, led on to a reduction of the primitive standard. Connection with the church by degrees became formal rather than spiritual ; submission to priestly rites and regulations took the place of personal union with Christ ; communicants received their membership through birth or through proselytic ceremony rather than through faith. Such was substantially the doctrine, or at least the practice, of the papal communion at the outbreak of the Reformation. The spiritual affirmation of Savonarola that the true church is composed only of those who are united in the bonds of love and truth by the indwelling grace of the Spirit, and the kindred teaching of Wiclif and Huss and other reformers before the Reformation, found no wide acceptance within its borders. The Professio Fidei Tridentinae, A. D. 1564, required simply a declaration of belief in the Nicene creed, in the Scriptures as interpreted by the holy mother church, in the seven sacraments as administered by the Roman priesthood, in the teachings of the Council of Trent concerning original sin and justification, in purgatory, in the veneration of images, in the supreme authority of the church, and a cordial acceptance of whatever else that church may declare to be obligatory as a matter of faith. Conversion, in the Protestant sense of that term, was not at that date neither has it ever since been a condition of papal church membership ; in fact such membership, formally established, is regarded as rather a condition of conversion, and of the attainment and culture of those graces and virtues which spring up as celestial fruits within the converted soul.

From the first the Protestant churches, though often affected injuriously by the papal practice, and often entangled by their

alliance with the state, strove to return to the biblical teaching and the apostolic usage. In the edition of 1540, the Augsburg Confession (Art. VII) describes the church as a congregation of the members of Christ, that is, saints who believe and obey him,—though it meanwhile admits that in this holy congregation there may be evil men and hypocrites, who are suffered to remain therein, but are reserved unto the final judgment. The French Confession (XXVII) defines the church as the company of the faithful, who agree to follow the Word of God and the pure religion which it teaches; who grow in grace all their lives, believing and becoming more and more confirmed in the fear of God. It however follows the older symbol in adding the cautionary statement: Nevertheless we do not deny that among the faithful there may be hypocrites and reprobates, but their wickedness cannot destroy the title (or standing) of the church. Similar language might be quoted from other symbols, both Lutheran and Reformed, giving conclusive proof of an earnest purpose among Protestants to set aside the Roman ceremonialism at this point, and to substitute for it the clear and simple teaching of the New Testament.

Calvin (Inst. B. IV: Ch. I) regards all those persons as entitled to church membership who by confession of faith, regularity in conduct and participation in the sacraments, do truly acknowledge God and Jesus Christ. He pronounces it a disgrace to admit unworthy persons to the communion, and counsels the expulsion of those who are openly immoral; yet urges the duty of large charity in forming judgment in regard to such persons, and meanwhile laments the infirmity of the times which—as he confesses—prevents the churches often from due exercise of discipline, in the case of gross offenders. But while such views and teaching were current in early Protestantism from the first, it must be confessed that its usage did not altogether conform to its own doctrine. Connection with the church came too often to be regarded as a matter of inheritance or residence, or of baptism or outward conformity or profession, rather than as a matter of gracious experience, springing from personal faith in a personal Savior. That this lower conception has widely prevailed in subsequent periods, even down to our own age, to the serious detriment of spiritual religion, is a painful fact of history. In too many Protestant communions the church is still viewed chiefly as a visible society, whose relationship to the soul is mainly external and formal,—into whose association one may be introduced as a matter of locality or by baptism and a general profession

of adherence, and outward conformity to whose prescribed rules is all that is requisite to acceptable Christian standing.

The name of Jonathan Edwards will always be associated with the stricter and loftier doctrine of church membership now widely accepted by evangelical Protestantism. He maintained (Qualifications for Full Communion) that the profession requisite is not a mere declaration of belief in the Christian religion, but an acknowledgment of repentance and faith in Christ as a personal Savior,—that such acknowledgment should be corroborated by an experience and life such as true repentance and true faith will induce,—that the profession made must be credible in the estimate of the church or its official representatives,—and that it should involve on the part of the professing person a full recognition of the duties implied in such connection, and an agreement to discharge all such duties, and to endeavor in every practicable way to secure to the church all those spiritual ends which the organization was established to subserve. This comprehensive profession is under his view in all ordinary cases to be made in the presence of the church,—it being not only a covenant with God and an act of irrevocable consecration to Christ and his cause, but also in a subordinate sense a covenant with the church, in which sacred obligations are implied on both sides, with corresponding right and privilege. Among those who hold in general the Edwardean view, considerable differences of opinion still exist as to the degree of strictness with which such profession is to be interpreted and enforced. Some authorities have maintained that the church or its officers acting for it assume no responsibility for the sincerity or the credibility of the act. It is indeed true that the church can give an applicant for admission no guarantee that he is a genuine disciple and will therefore assuredly be saved. But certainly it can give him, and at such a critical juncture in his spiritual life ought to give him, all the inspection and the counsel and the protection possible, in order that he may not through negligence on its part fall into serious, perhaps irreparable, mistake. It is true that the church cannot in all cases prevent such persons from acting while they are ignorant of their real condition, or exclude from its companionship those who finally prove to be hypocrites at heart. Yet it certainly is bound by the tenderest and strongest obligations to protect both itself and its true membership so far as possible from all such illicit affiliations.

It is matter of regret that so few traces have been preserved of the debate in the Assembly (Minutes, 82–84) on the gathering

of churches, and especially on the qualifications of those who should be received into the church. We have only the simple record of a discussion on positive signs of conversion, and a statement that the omission of necessary duties is as truly a bar to admission as the committing of gross sins. In a subsequent debate, more prolonged and more fully reported, (121) on the offences that should exclude a church member from the communion, there is evidence that the Assembly took high and safe ground,—applying practically, it may be, the searching doctrine of Calvin just quoted, though they admit the impossibility, by any enumeration of sins, of making a catalogue so sufficient as to preserve the sacraments pure. Their subsequent conflict with Parliament respecting disciplinable offences, such as might properly exclude from church communion, (435 *seq.*) clearly shows the development in their minds of spiritual and searching opinions on the whole subject. From their elevated conception of the Christian character, and their profound view of the experience through which one must pass in attaining such character, we may justly infer that their list of positive signs of conversion would not have fallen far below that which a hundred years later Edwards so faithfully set forth.

The phrases, *their offspring*, *their children*, in the definition of the particular church, start an interesting query. It is a fact already mentioned that the primitive Protestantism counted the children of believing parents as constructively, not through the right of baptism but by birth, members in the household of faith. This was not merely a continuance of the dogma which had prevailed prior to the Reformation, and which Catholicism still maintained. It sprang rather from the recognition of the pious family as a unit according to the Abrahamic model, and from the popular conception of the church as a larger family in which the godly household might in its entirety have a welcome place. One evidence of this appears in the stress laid even in the earliest creeds, as that of Augsburg (IX), on infant baptism as being an offering of the child to God, and its reception thereby into his gracious favor,—it being generally held that such baptism is even necessary to its salvation. The Saxon Visitation Articles (1592) charged it upon the Calvinists as one of their false and erroneous opinions, that the infants of Christians are already holy before baptism in the womb of the mother, and even in the womb of the mother are received into the covenant of eternal life,—a charge which is justified by the teaching, for example, of both the Helvetic Confessions, that the kingdom of God

belongs to children, and that they are in covenant with God through parental faith, and therefore ought to be baptized. The Heidelberg Catechism states the doctrine still more fully, affirming (74) that children as well as their parents belong to the covenant and people of God; that both redemption and the Holy Ghost who works faith, are through the blood of Christ promised to them no less than to their parents; and that they are by baptism as a sign of the covenant, to be engrafted into the Christian church, and thereby distinguished from the children of unbelievers. The Catechisms for children which from the time of Luther sprang up so abundantly wherever the Reformation spread, both on the continent and in Britain, show in an interesting way how fully the Protestant churches recognized the doctrine of infant membership, and how carefully they endeavored to carry out the doctrine in the training of the children of believing parents for Christ and his service.

Nowhere else is this doctrine enforced so positively or carried out into such detail, as in the Westminster standards. In addition to the phrases occurring in the definition of the particular church, it is formally taught in the chapter on Baptism (XXVIII) that not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized; and such baptism is described as a sign of a real connection with the visible church. In the Larger Catechism (166) it is declared that such infants are, on account of parental faith and obedience, within the covenant from birth, and therefore are to be baptized. Such children, if dying in infancy, are said (X: iii) to be regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth. In the original Directory for Worship, and in the amended American Directory also, there may be found a more extended statement not merely of the sacrament of baptism, but of the underlying doctrine of the unity of the family in grace as truly as in nature; in which it is affirmed that the children of saints are *Christians* (omitted in the Amer. Direct.), and are federally holy before baptism, and as such are entitled to receive the sacrament. In the American Book of Discipline it is said that such children are not only to be baptized, but to be regarded as under the care of the church, and subject to its government; and that, when they have reached proper age, they are under bond to perform all the duties of church members. They are to be taught in childhood the Catechism, the Apostles' creed, and the Prayer of our Lord; also to abhor sin and fear God and

obey the Lord Jesus Christ; and when they have reached years of discretion, if sufficiently instructed, and blameless in conduct, they are after due examination to be told that they ought to partake of the Christian communion. The membership of such children and youth must however be regarded at the outset as constructive and conditional only. It becomes complete in reality only when at suitable age they make public profession of their faith, and take their places voluntarily within the church. It needs only to be added that there is some danger that this very positive doctrine may lead, as it once did with disastrous consequences in New England, to an undervaluation of that personal experience of religion on which Edwards so earnestly and justly insisted. Without conversion and the Christian life, no outward membership can ever be other than an empty and pernicious form.

Section third of this chapter declares that to the Visible Church in its totality, and therefore to each particular church, *Christ hath given the ministry and oracles and ordinances of God:* and the gracious purpose in this bestowment is declared to be *the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life.* It is also said that Christ by his presence and Spirit, according to his promise, *doth make effectual thereunto* these supernatural gifts, and further that he will continue them unto the church *to the end of the world.* The first of these endowments is the Christian ministry—an endowment in some respects analogous to the appointment of the priesthood under the Hebraic dispensation, but manifestly in other aspects distinct and superior, just as the new dispensation surpassed the old. The full consideration of the ministry as a consecrated order may be reserved until we are led to consider the church itself as an organism; but it may well be noted here that the Christian ministry is not a human profession or function merely, but a gift of Christ to his visible church—a gift which he himself selects, whose fitness and sphere he determines, and which bears upon it the imprimatur of his appointment. In the Form of Government, (Ch. IV.) the office is specifically defined as *first in the church, both for dignity and usefulness:* the particular duties devolving upon him who holds it are carefully described, his spiritual equipment and authority are set forth in the terse declarration that he is the messenger of God and angel of the church.

7. The Particular church: its endowment: ministry, oracles, ordinances.

The Christian minister as thus described is in every aspect an official of higher grade than the Aaronic priest, endowed for a loftier service and ministering at a grander altar. He does not

receive his appointment primarily from any human source: he is the gift of Christ immediately, and as such bears with him supernatural credentials stamped upon his consecrated personality, and made manifest in and through the spiritual services he is appointed to render. The organized church in a secondary sense judges of his qualifications for the office, and grants him its approval in the exercise of his ministerial functions within certain prescribed spheres. But his commission comes primarily not from the church but from Christ, the Master, whose authorized embassador he becomes through the inward call of the Spirit and the outward call of providence. This was the lofty conception of Protestantism almost universally, in contrast with the Roman notion of a priestly order, wholly above the church. The Council of Trent had affirmed that there is in the Christian church a new, visible and external priesthood, translated from Judaism and instituted by Christ; and that to the apostles and to their successors in this priesthood as an independent body, had been delivered the power of consecrating, offering and administering his body and blood, and also of forgiving and of retaining sins. Against this dogma Zwingli protested in the earnest declaration (62:63) that Scripture recognizes no priests or presbyters but such as are conformed to the Word of God, and that they are the only true ministers who preach that Word, obey the Scriptures, and serve the church in necessary things according to the divine order. The First Helvetic Conf. (XVI : XIX) defines in detail the functions of the Christian minister, gives him the title of pastor as distinguished from priest, and repudiates earnestly the papal notion of a priestly order. Similar declarations appear in other Protestant formularies. Calvin quotes against the hierarchal theory the remark of Cyprian, that a priest should be elected publicly in the presence of all the people, and should be approved as a worthy and fit person by the public judgment and testimony. He also devotes an entire chapter in the Institutes (Book IV : 3) to a description of the Protestant minister as distinct from the papal priest, setting forth in detail his duties and prerogatives, and eloquently exalting the office as one of divine appointment and of very special dignity and worth.

Two correlated gifts bestowed by Christ upon his Visible Church in all its branches are indicated in this section by the terms, *oracles* and *ordinances*. The subject of the Christian ordinances, as distinct from the ceremonials of Mosaism or of Rome, may best be considered in connection with the sacraments and worship appointed by our Lord for the edification of his organized

people. The term, *oracle*, obviously refers to the inspired Scriptures as being or containing that Word of God, which according to Zwingli it was the primary and chief office of the Christian minister to proclaim to men. The term, though pagan in origin, was used by both Paul and Peter, and by the authors of Hebrews and Acts also, in the loftier sense just described—those Logia of Deity, which especially constitute the Gospel as a message of mercy to mankind. These Holy Scriptures manifestly are the first and in some sense the chief among those precious ordinances with which every true church is divinely endowed. Two things should be specially noted here: first, that the Bible is represented in this chapter, and in many ways throughout the Symbols, as given not to the priesthood as an exclusive bestowment or trust, but to the church as a body, to be studied, cherished, believed and embraced by every member, in the exercise of intelligent and conscientious judgment, and under a supreme sense of accountability to God for the use made of this supernatural communication. This is in harmony with the grand affirmation of the first chapter that *all the people of God have right unto and interest in the Scriptures*, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them . . . that, the Word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the Scriptures may have hope. In the Directory for Worship (Chap. III) it is further enjoined that the Scriptures shall be publicly read, from the most approved translation, in the vulgar tongue, that all may hear and understand.

The Directory brings out, secondly (VII), the correlative truth already suggested, that the Christian ministry is before and above all else a ministry of the Word,—not a priestly function to be exercised, as the Council of Trent had declared, in administering the sacraments and in pardoning sin or pronouncing guilt, but a gracious schoolmastership qualified to explain and commend the teachings of the Bible, and set apart for this educational and edifying service. Christ in fact gives the holy oracles, the divine Logia, first of all, and then appoints the ministry as his messengers to bring these oracles to the knowledge and experience of the saints and of all who consent to hear the message. And herein spiritual Christianity both manifests its supernatural quality, and reveals the secret of its matchless power. A sacred book such as the Bible, an appointed order of teachers fitted to expound it, and an appropriate time and place and opportunity for its exposition such as the sanctuary and the church afford,—these are things which forever differentiate spiritual Christianity both from

papal formalisms and from all false faiths, and conclusively prove it to be, as the section teaches, a gift of God unto men.

As these endowments are supernatural in origin and quality, they are also said to be supernaturally sustained and empowered,—the presence of Christ and his Spirit *making them effectual*, in the accomplishment of their predestined purpose. There is indeed a certain degree of power to produce spiritual results resident in the ordinances and in the ministry, contemplated as persuasive agencies, and eminently, as we have had occasion to observe, in the lively oracles, the inspired and authoritative Word. But what could the Christian ordinances accomplish, if the divine Spirit did not reside in them, and through them influence the minds and lives of men? What success could Christian ministers hope to secure in the line either of converting unregenerate souls or of edifying the saints, if that Spirit were not dwelling in them as an illuminating, guiding, energizing agency, and if the present Christ were not with them according to his gracious promise? And what saving issues could be expected even from the potent truths of Scripture, with all their convincing and convicting power, were it not for the supernatural influences flowing into and through them, and rendering them mighty to the pulling down of the strongholds, the dreadful barriers, of sin and unbelief? We may well believe that the Christ who gave these agencies, dwells also in them continually, and that the Spirit who prepared the Word, and who called the ministry to the task of proclaiming it, never leaves that Word to work out its results independently, or forsakes his chosen agents when in the name of Christ they proclaim it as a divine message to man. Supernatural in origin and quality, these instrumentalities are to be recognized as also supernaturally sustained and supernaturally empowered in all their operations, and are thus *made effectual*, as the section teaches, in the great process of salvation.

The chief end or purpose of this threefold endowment has already been mentioned. It is first the *gathering*, and then the *perfecting* of those who are united together within the visible church. The question has been discussed whether a church which has no minister, is indeed in the biblical sense, a church. Presumably such an organization may exist, at least for a period, though it could not prosper, without a commissioned minister. But it is even more obvious that no church can be *gathered*, can be organized into visible form, without the ordinances and the holy oracles which are such characteristic features of spiritual Christianity. The inspired Word is an indispensable instrumentality,

the appointed ordinances are indispensable factors, and it is through these as well as by the ministry that the saints, in the language of the section, are gathered, grouped, constituted into one family of grace, and through these that those who are thus brought together, are instructed, strengthened, perfected in the divine life. Even those who reject the doctrine of an ordained ministry, or of prescribed sacraments, or other kindred observances as constituents of the church, still cling to the Word and to the ordained means of grace as furnishing not only the justifying reason for their fellowship, but also the source and spring of their growth and their perfection in the Christian life.

8. The particular church, its organization: church government.

Another element in the conception of the particular church lies in the idea of organization. As we have already seen, a church must be something more than a temporary or even a permanent association of believers: some appropriate law or bond of union is requisite as the essential basis of such association. There must be not only piety as the animating life of the organism ; there must also be constitutional rules, resting on just foundations and regulating that life in all its varied manifestations. This is implied in the two or three remarkable metaphors by which the church is described in the New Testament. Whether it be contemplated as a living body, or as a family, or as a state, organization always appears as one of its primal characteristics. A church without constitutional regimen of some fitting type would be wholly incompetent to perform those services for the securing of which the church was divinely established. We are not concerned just now with questions respecting this or that actual or possible form of such organization: the generic fact is all that needs to be emphasized. In chapter XXX, which treats specifically of Church Censures, it is said that the Lord Jesus as king and head of his church *hath therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers;* and there is added the phrase, very suggestive of the conflicts of the age, *distinct from the civil magistrate.* While the Assembly was willing, as we have seen, to invoke the help of the civil magistracy in the enforcement of church authority, even to the extent of imprisoning or otherwise punishing those whom the chuch condemned as heretical, it was far from willing that such magistracy should attempt to administer government within the church itself. It was led therefore to emphasize the fundamental proposition that the church should elect its own officers, prescribe their several spheres, and empower them to exercise adequate authority within

its domain. In this view it was led also to define the various offices that should be instituted in the church, to construct a specific form of administration for the guidance of church officers, and to provide for a series of ecclesiastical assemblies, above the particular church, in which supreme power within the religious sphere should be vested.

The Form of Government, as drafted by the Assembly, affirms that the officers which Christ hath appointed are, some *extraordinary*, as apostles, evangelists and prophets, *which are ceased;* others *ordinary and perpetual*, as pastors, teachers, and other church governors, and deacons. In the American Form it is simply said that, while our Lord at first collected and formed his church by the mission of *men endued with miraculous gifts which have long since ceased*, the ordinary and perpetual officers in the church are bishops or pastors, the representatives of the people, usually styled ruling elders, and deacons. In both drafts we find the same careful exclusion of the dogma of apostolic succession, and of the prophetical and evangelistic orders. It is declared that the reason for the existence of such extraordinary offices has passed away, and that the supernatural enduement which qualified certain chosen men at first to hold offices of this type, has also passed away. The papal claim of a transmissible apostolate, and the kindred claim of prelatic succession, was thus absolutely rejected. That claim in whatever form has now come to be regarded generally as invalid, not merely on the ground named, that miraculous gifts are no longer conferred upon men, but on the further ground that none could properly be regarded as apostles but those who, in the phrase of Luke, had companied with the Lord Jesus from the beginning to the end of his ministry, or those who, in the phrase of Paul, had seen the Lord through some personal manifestation such as had been granted to him on the road to Damascus. The prophetical office had also, in the judgment of the Assembly, terminated in like manner, inasmuch as *this way of revealing the divine will to the church had now manifestly ceased.* The office of the evangelist also, which consisted in bearing testimony to Christ and his resurrection, and in proclaiming to the outlying world the Gospel of salvation through him, possibly with miraculous attestations or other charismatic manifestations, had also completed its usefulness—at least in the form which the term as used in the New Testament suggests. These, in the language of the original Symbol, were all *extraordinary:* having accomplished their peculiar mission during the apostolic century, they had ceased to appear, and were never, it

is implied, to be reproduced. They were no more essential to the propagation of religion in the earth, or to the proper organization of the visible church as the divine agent in such propagation, than would have been the continuous life and teaching and messiahship, century after century, of Him of whom the apostles and evangelists and prophets were the primitive and the supernaturally endowed witnesses. The visible church has existed through the ages without their special aid, and probably is stronger and broader and more commanding in its influence, than it would have been, had prophets still foretold the future, or evangelists had testified preternaturally, or apostles had been preserved alive to tell the wondrous story of the Savior and the Cross.

Still it is obvious that what are here called *ordinary and perpetual* offices and officers are necessary, and will continue through the ages to be necessary to the proper organization of the church, and to the adequate administration of its affairs, both internal and external. This necessity is clearly fundamental, whatever may be the judgment of this or that Christian body as to the best way of supplying such need. In the original Form of Gov. it is affirmed that as the apostles exercised government at the first, so Christ hath continually furnished some in his church with *gifts of government*, and with commission to execute the same when called thereunto; and it is added, that it is lawful and agreeable to the Word of God, that such government should assume the Presbyterian type. In the amended American Form it is said to be expedient and agreeable to Scripture and the practice of the primitive Christians, not only that government should exist in some certain form, but also that this particular type of government should be established in the church. It is added, however, in terms that cannot be too strongly emphasized: In full consistency with this belief, we embrace in the spirit of charity those Christians who differ from us in opinion or in practice on these subjects. It was natural and in a degree politic that the Assembly in Westminster, speaking in the presence of Episcopacy on one side and of a rising Independency on the other, should claim no more than is contained in their adopted Form, though it is certain from the long and earnest debates that many, probably a large majority of the members, clung to the tenet of a jure divino Presbyterianism, and in their hearts rejected all churches otherwise organized. It is also probable that similar motives influenced the first American Assembly when, speaking in the presence of a wide variety of denominations, organized in ways more or less unlike their own, they adopted the pacific language just quoted,—affirming

on one side quite as strongly as the divines of Westminster, that Presbyterianism was agreeable, even specially agreeable, to Scripture and to the practice of the primitive Christians, while on the other side recognizing full liberty of opinion and of usage as to the whole matter, and the obligation of comprehensive charity toward all who might differ. Whatever may be true of individual minds, or of this or that particular organization, American Presbyterianism has never been committed to the jure divino theory, or affirmed that churches formed on the Independent or on the Episcopal model, or on some interblending and modification of either of these general types, are not true and worthy churches of Jesus Christ.

Adverting to the generic conception of the church as an organization, we may note the vital fact that, whatever may be the preferred form of such organization, the practical ends to be sought are always essentially the same. These practical ends are three in number,—instruction, government distinctively speaking, and charitable administration. Wherever and however these ends are secured, through adequate official instrumentalities, all the chief needs of the church as an organism are substantially met. While it is to be admitted that extensive differences of judgment and usage have arisen, and still exist, as to the most effectual way of providing for this threefold necessity, it is yet pleasant to note that, amid all such differences, there is much more of practical agreement than is commonly supposed. That the primal end of instruction can be best secured through the agency of a duly trained and ordained ministry, is now almost universally believed, however great the variety of opinion respecting the mode of providing such a ministry, or the proper functions of the ministerial office. That the church should be duly governed by some authority, acting in and for the body, is now regarded by all alike as appropriate and indispensable, whether those who rule shall bear the name of elder or some other title, or shall hold office in the Presbyterian mode or some other,—the end in view being gained in substance, notwithstanding all variations in name or method or comparative official responsibility. That the charitable ministrations of the church to needy saints, and to others under its care or within its reach, should be carried on through the diaconate, as in the church at Jerusalem, or through some corresponding agency qualified and chosen for that delicate task, is almost universally recognized, although here also we are confronted by wide varieties in mode and usage. The broad fact, underlying all variations, is that when due provision has been

made, in whatever appropriate way, for adequate religious instruction, for orderly and effective government and discipline, and for beneficent administration such as Christian charity demands, any church may regard itself as adequately organized alike for interior efficiency and for outward activity and growth.

9. The particular church; Power of the keys; Discipline.

One other feature remains to be considered before we pass from the study of the particular church to the contemplation of the various forms of larger ecclesiastical organization: it is what is described in the Symbols as *the power of the keys*, involving especially the right to exercise discipline. The phrase has its origin in the declaration of our Lord, first to Peter and afterward to all the Apostles collectively, as to their authority to bind and to loose, to convict of sin or to remit sin as his representatives. Hooker (Eccl. Polity) interprets this declaration as follows: Our Lord and Savior giveth his apostles regimen in general over his church; for they that have the keys of the kingdom of heaven are thereby signified to be stewards of the house of God, under whom they guide, command, judge and correct his family. This would seem to imply that such official stewardship was to be in a measure independent of the church thus guided and commanded. It is a familiar fact that the entire papal system of government rests on the more positive assumption that this power of the keys is in no sense the prerogative of the church, but belongs to the priestly orders exclusively. It is claimed that this type of authority was transmissible from the apostles directly to other hands; that they did actually choose and ordain successors for this function; and especially that Peter transferred this among other prerogatives to his successors in the Roman see. The church consequently has no right of itself to determine what terms of admission into it shall be prescribed, or who shall be connected with it, or what shall be done with unworthy members within its fold: Council of Trent, Session XXXII.

It has sometimes been affirmed that the authority to bind and to loose, thus conferred by our Lord upon the apostles, was a part of their peculiar investiture as a body of inspired men chosen to be leaders in his developing church—a qualification therefore which, like the power to work miracles or to speak in unknown tongues, was incapable of transmission. But Protestantism generally has held that Peter and afterwards the entire apostolic college were thus addressed by Christ representatively, and that the authority in the case was in fact conferred not on themselves

personally, but through them on the church to whose construction and guidance their lives were to be devoted. Protestants claim this prerogative for the church as an organism, and by consequence repudiate absolutely the papal assumption of priestly supremacy. It is not clear, however, that either the Lutheran or the Reformed communions at first carried the proposition out to its full extent: at least, in some of their formularies it seems to be suggested that the power of the keys was to be held and wielded, not so much by the church at large, as by those called to office therein. The first Helvetic Conf. (XIX) speaks of pastors and teachers who legitimately use this power within the visible church; and the second Helvetic declares that the keys of the kingdom of heaven, out of which the papists forged swords, scepters and crowns, are given to all legitimate ministers, together with the preaching of the Gospel. Yet these Confessions, and the Belgic and some others, furnish at least a partial corrective in their emphatic statement, that all church officers must be duly chosen by the membership—a requistion which of necessity would render their authority representative and official rather than personal.

In the American Form of Gov. this right of the church to choose those who should rule, is strongly affirmed,—with its legitimate consequence in their full accountability to the church electing them, for the manner in which their executive duties are discharged. In the introductory chapter of this Form it is expressly stated that our Savior for the edification of his visible church, hath appointed officers . . . to exercise discipline for the preservation of both truth and duty; and that it is incumbent upon these officers, *and upon the whole church in whose name they act*, to censure or cast out the erroneous and scandalous. It is also said (Ch. VIII) that the power vested in such officers by the church is wholly moral or spiritual as well as delegated, and is ministerial and declarative only. In the debate on church government, in the Westminster Assembly, it was strongly declared (Minutes, 242) that such government is not civil but spiritual, not original but derivative, not supreme but subordinate to Christ, not lordly but ministerial, not arbitrary but limited by Scripture. It is under these limitations, which are seen at once to be essential to the proper autonomy of the church, that the sweeping clause of the Confession (Ch. XXX: ii) is to be interpreted, which declares that to these officers the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sin, to shut that

kingdom against the impenitent both by the Word and censures, and to open it unto penitent sinners by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures. Taken by itself, apart from the meliorating statements just quoted, this section would seem to confer on church officials as a body much of the jurisdiction, original and irresponsible, that had been claimed by the Tridentine Council for the papal hierarchy.

Among the forms in which the power of the keys thus vested in the particular church may be exercised are, first, the determination under the rule of Scripture of the terms and method of admission to its fellowship; secondly, the right to make and enforce whatever laws and regulations are found to be essential to its harmony and growth, and to the full discharge of all its functions as a religious organism; thirdly, the further right to exercise discipline upon unfaithful or unworthy members in whatever ways may be deemed essential and in harmony with Scripture; and fourthly, the right to purify itself whenever it is needful, by the expulsion of errorists or of grossly wicked persons. These processes, and whatever others may be essential to its development and efficiency as a branch of the church of Christ, every organized household of faith may legitimately carry out, by virtue of the authority divinely conferred upon it. It may indeed, and under the Presbyterian system does, intrust the exercise of this right to men officially chosen as its representatives, in order to secure more effectively thereby the desired end: under that system it may also be conjoined with other particular churches in order to gain this end still more effectively; but it may never surrender its divinely conferred autonomy to any human authority whatsoever, civil or ecclesiastical. The keys of the kingdom have been placed by the Head of the Church in its hands, and for the use of the potestas clavium in whatever direction it is immediately responsible to him and to him only.

The American Book of Discipline defines church discipline distinctively as the exercise of that authority and the application of that system of laws which Christ has appointed in his church. It also describes the ends to be sought in such discipline, as the promotion of the purity and edification of the body, and the spiritual good of offenders against its authority, and also the vindication of the honor of Christ and the Christian religion. Milton in his Treatise on Church Government highly extols such discipline, affirming that, when rightly administered, it assumes the very shape and image of virtue. The scope of church discipline is very broad. The Symbol affirms that whatever in the doctrine

or principles or practice of any member or officer is contrary to the Word of God, or whatever may tempt others to sin, or may mar their edification as believers, should be regarded as a disciplinable offence. Yet on the other hand, it enjoins that such discipline must in all cases be exercised with special prudence and discretion, and should assume a judicial and punitive form only when clearly demanded by Scripture, or by the practice or teaching of the church founded on the Scriptures. It is not needful here to enter into detailed account of the prescribed processes by which such discipline is carried out in the Presbyterian mode: see Digest, 1898, p. 604, *seq.*

From this general definition of church discipline in its nature and processes and aims, we naturally pass to consider the chapter in the Confession (XXX) which treats specifically of *Church Censures.* The term signifies some form of penalty pronounced on those who have been found guilty under due ecclesiastical procedure. The right to inflict such censure on just occasion is a necessary corollary from the right to exercise discipline. Such right was recognized everywhere in Protestantism, from the beginning. The Belgic Conf. declared (XXX : XXXII) that church government is divinely instituted, not only that in this way the true religion may be preserved and the true doctrine everywhere propagated, but also that transgressors may be punished and restrained by spiritual means. For this purpose even excommunication is requisite, it is said, with the several circumstances belonging to it, according to the Word of God. The Irish Articles, in language which applies to private members as well as to ministers, teaches (70) that it appertaineth to the discipline of the church that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences, and finally, being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed. But no antecedent formulary contains so full and practical a statement of the whole subject as the chapter now under consideration, especially when taken in connection with the practical chapter in the American Directory for Worship (XI) on the Mode of Inflicting and Removing Censures : Digest, 1898, Ch. XI.

The ends to be sought in the infliction of censures are named in section second of the chapter, as the reclaiming of the offending brother, the deterring of others from like offences, the purging out of the infectious leaven of evil from the church, the vindication of the honor of Christ and of the profession of his Gospel, and the prevention of that wrath of God which might justly fall upon his church, if it should suffer his covenant and the seals

thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders. Three forms or grades of censure are described in the following section, admonition private or public by the church or its representatives, suspension for a season from the holy communion or from all church privileges, and finally, formal excommunication from the household of faith,—the grade of penalty being determined in each case by the nature of the crime and the proved demerit of the person arraigned. The mode of administering such punishment is left to the officers of the church acting in its behalf,—the object in view being edification rather than destruction, the spirit one of brotherly tenderness and Christian meekness, and the process marked by great solemnity as well as love, in the hope that the delinquent may be impressed with a sense of his sin and haply be brought to repentance. No civil penalties are to be imposed: fine or imprisonment may not be inflicted: social standing may not be impaired, excepting so far as exclusion from church fellowship may reach. The entire process, in the language of the American Form, is *ministerial and declarative* only. It may be profitable to add that admonition does not effect the membership of the admonished party; that suspension from the communion or other church privileges is designed to be temporary rather than permanent; and that the Directory makes provision for the orderly removal even of the sentence of excommunication, and for the restoration of the offender to fellowship upon satisfactory evidence of repentance and a purpose to lead a Christian life.

10. Ecclesiastical organizations: Synods and Councils: constitution and object.

The particular church having been considered as to its constitution and membership, its endowment with an elect ministry and with the divine oracles and ordinances, its government and its right to exercise discipline and to hold for itself the power of the keys by the authority of Christ and in full accountability to him only, it is now incumbent to inquire further whether and how particular churches may be fitly associated or conjoined in some larger form of ecclesiastical organization. Certainly it is not in harmony with the genius of Christianity, or with the doctrine of the communion of saints, that every such church should stand altogether by itself, recognizing in no definite way the sacred relationship which it sustains toward every other particular church which constitutes together with it an essential part of the one body of Christ. Absolute independency cannot justify itself in the presence of the plain and tender Pauline

teaching as to that body. The same sense of affiliation which draws individual Christians together within any single household of faith, and the same divine law which not only commends but requires such fellowship, are no less applicable or effective in the case of churches. And it is an interesting illustration of this truth that the Protestant churches throughout northern Europe from the beginning sought such affiliation and placed themselves so far as possible under this comprehensive law. Civic and provincial and national boundaries, diversities of language and the prejudice of race and other like influences stood in the way of that close fellowship, that practical and even organic unity, which many of the Protestant leaders both continental and insular strongly desired. Yet the doctrine of the church invisible as one, and of all visible churches as constituent parts of that one invisible church, was at no time merely a theological tenet: it was also a living conviction and force tending steadily toward the consolidation and unifying, so far as this was practicable, of all who rejoiced together under the Protestant name.

The chapter (XXXI) in the Confession which treats *Of Synods and Councils* may be taken as a marked illustration of this tendency, though it was by no means the first illustration. The Second Helvetic Conf. (XVIII) had declared that proper control and discipline should be exercised over the doctrine and conduct of ministers in or by synods; and also that general or ecumenical councils are not to be disapproved, if they are conducted according to the apostolic example, for the welfare and not for the corruption of the church. The Scotch Conf. also had an extended Article (XX) on the subject, protesting on one hand against the assumption that such councils may not err in opinion or be guilty of grievous wrong in practice, but on the other affirming their value for the confutation of heresies and the more public profession of the common faith, and also in establishing good policy and just order within the church. One of the Thirty-Nine Articles (XXI) which was omitted in the American edition of 1801, but has been restored with some modifications by the Reformed Episcopal communion, recognized the propriety and authority of such general councils, but like the Scotch Confession warned against the abuses to which, as the history of the councils of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries had shown, such bodies were always exposed. A cautionary statement of the same tenor appears in the Irish Articles: 76–79. But the completest teaching on the subject is fonnd in the chapter just named, in the broad proposition that for the better government and further edification

of the church *there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils:* and further that it belongeth to the rulers of the particular churches to appoint such assemblies, and to convene together in them *as often as they shall judge it expedient for the good of the church.* This is the American form of the section: but in the original form it was declared that civil magistrates also may lawfully call such synods; and that, in case the magistrates are open enemies to the church, the ministers themselves, with other fit persons delegated by the churches, may meet in this way. The reason for the original form as adopted and presented to Parliament by the Assembly, and likewise the reason for the American modification, precluding the civil magistracy from all share in the convening or control of such councils, will be at once apparent.

The sphere within which such ecclesiastical assemblies are to act, and the specific duties which may devolve upon them, are concisely given in the second section;—to determine controversies of faith and questions of conscience, to give directions for the better ordering of the worship and government of the churches, and to correct all wrong in church discipline. A more specific account of these duties appears in those chapters (X–XII) in the American Form of Gov. which define largely the spheres and functions of the several judicatories in the Presbyterian organism. What is just here to be noted is the fact that, whatever may be the arrangement for such larger assemblages in this or that Christian communion, and whether they are held but occasionally or are provided for as permanent factors in the organization of any such communion, their function has always been substantially the same, even from the earliest ages. Tertullian, writing during the second century, tells us that in his day councils of all the churches were held in certain localities throughout Greece (and doubtless elsewhere) whereat matters of deeper moment were treated in common, and the presence or representation of all bearing the Christian name was celebrated with much veneration. The history of similar assemblages through nearly all the centuries succeeding down to the era of Constance and Basle, constitutes in fact a large part of the history of Christianity. It has well been said that such councils have almost always been important centers of development with respect alike to the doctrine, the liturgy or worship, and the constitution of the church. Two practical rules, whose importance had been tested again and again in the antecedent experience of both Romanism and Protestantism, were laid down by the Assembly in the subsequent sections

of this chapter: first, that such councils should never interfere in civil affairs except under certain specified conditions, but rather should confine their attention exclusively to what is ecclesiastical, or what relates to the government or edification of the church; and secondly that, inasmuch as all such councils are liable to error, as many of them have erred, their decisions are not to be regarded as final or infallible rules in either faith or practice, but are simply to be used as helps in personal belief or duty so far as they are seen to conform to the Word of God. The first of these practical rules is of special significance as having been the occasion of various divisions in Britain, and of at least one such disastrous division in American Presbyterianism. The second contains a caution emphasized by many instances in Protestant history, and worthy to be borne always in mind alike by all such denominational assemblages and by those who are brought in any manner under their jurisdiction. For it may well be questioned whether, valuable as such councils have again and again proved themselves in their relation to *the better government and edification of the church*, Christendom has ever contained within its bosom a more explosive or disintegrating element. Even the venerable Assembly of Westminster, as we have had occasion more than once to note, may serve in some degree to illustrate this universal danger. There is great practical wisdom in the statement of the Amer. Form of Gov. (Ch. I: vii) that there is much greater danger from the usurped claim of making laws than from the right of judging upon laws already made and common to all who profess the Gospel,—although this right, as necessity requires in the present state, be *lodged with fallible men.*

Such ecclesiastical assemblages, by whatever name they are styled, may be widely varied in their origin, in their constituents, in their duration, and their relation to the form and life of the communions which they represent. It is a familiar fact that the great ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries were convened by imperial authority, and that many of the Protestant councils, as the Synod of Dort, had a similar origin. The Westminster Assembly, as we have seen, was a creation of the English Parliament primarily. Other conciliar bodies, like the Council of Trent, have been called into being by papal authority acting in entire independence of both state and church. Under the prelatic system such councils or convocations, consisting of the clergy, may in like manner be summoned by episcopal authority under certain prescribed conditions. Congregationalism provides for local councils to consider particular issues or transact some

specified business, and to some extent for assemblages of a more comprehensive or ecumenical character. In the Presbyterian Form of Gov. provision is made (Ch. VIII) for several classes of such conciliar bodies, presbyterial and synodical, culminating in the General Assembly as the supreme judicatory of the church. It is hardly needful to add that such councils however organized may differ as to their constituency, either including the clergy, higher or lower, apart from the membership, or the clergy and laity united under certain conditions and in some fixed ratio of representation; that they may also be convened but once, for certain special reasons, and then terminate their existence finally, or be permanently organized with a view to the better securing of results such as only a continuous existence can adequately secure; and also, that they may differ widely in the character of their deliberations, in the significance and authoritativeness of their actions, and in their relations to the general life of the church or churches which they represent.

This general survey of Synods and Councils, in their nature and their relations to the organic life of the church visible, naturally leads on to a more specific consideration of the Presbyterian system of church organization, as set forth partly in the Confession, but chiefly in the Form of Government and in the American Book of Discipline. The essential features of this mode of organization are, first, that the right of government in the particular church is vested, not in the ministry as an order above the church, but in the membership as a body; secondly, that this body shall govern itself representatively, through the election of competent persons chosen by the church to exercise such government in conjunction with its elect ministry—such representatives acting under a fixed code of procedure, and wielding only a delegated and declarative authority; thirdly, that in order to secure mutual counsel and assistance, to preserve soundness of doctrine and regularity of discipline, and to enter into common measures for preventing error and immorality and promoting knowledge and religion, (Form of Gov. Ch. X) these separate congregations or churches shall be permanently associated together within a given territory as a presbytery, or within a larger region as a synod, or more comprehensively still as a general assembly including and representing the whole Church in a given province or country; and fourthly, that in order to the existence and usefulness of such a series of judicatories, there must be an established constitution or code of laws, containing all needful definitions or

11. The Presbyterian System; its elements and values.

limitations of respective prerogative and duty, and controlling the activities of the united body in such ways as shall best protect the rights of each individual church and member, and at the same time promote also the prosperity and honor of the entire Church as thus organized and unified. In an authoritative Note appended to the Form of Gov. Ch. XII, we learn what were regarded by the first American Assembly as the radical principles involved in such organization. These principles, briefly stated, are, first, that the several different congregations (or particular churches) taken collectively constitute in reality one Church: secondly, that a larger part of this Church, or a representation of it, shall oversee and govern each smaller part and be empowered to determine matters of controversy which may arise therein: thirdly, that a representation of the whole shall within prescribed limits rule and determine in regard to every part and to all the parts as united:—and fourthly, that all appeals (or other judicial questions or matters of common interest) may be carried from the lower to the higher judicatories, until they are decided at last by the collected wisdom and united voice of the whole Church: Digest, 1898, p. 259, *seq.*

In justifying an ecclesiastical organism so elaborate and complex as this, it is not needful to claim that this type of church government in its varied details is defined clearly and exactly in the New Testament. We may indeed set aside as without adequate historic support the rationalistic hypothesis of Baur and his successors, European and American, that no definite form of government existed in the primitive church. But it is clear on the other hand that no exact and exclusive form, adjusted to the needs of the church in all lands and ages, and divinely prescribed as such, can be found in Scripture. Such a discovery has often been claimed in Protestant circles, as it is imperatively affirmed by Rome. Episcopacy early asserted for itself, still in some degree asserts, such exclusive biblical warrant. The Cambridge Platform declared, in the interest of Independency, that all the parts of church government are so exactly described in the Word of God, that it is not the province of man to add or diminish or alter anything in the least measure therein. The Westminster Assembly, or at least the large majority of its members, affirmed no less strongly the explicit warrant in Scripture for the Presbyterian system as set forth in its formularies. But this was not the universal judgment, even in that age. As far back as the Scotch Confession, another view presents itself in the fraternal (XX) statement: Not that we think that any policy or order in

ceremonies can be appointed for all ages, times and places. The American Synod, from which sprang the first General Assembly, said expressly: We do not believe that God has been pleased so to reveal and enjoin every minute circumstance of ecclesiastical government and discipline, as not to leave room for orthodox churches of Christ in these minutiae to differ with charity from one another. On this wiser basis, it is simply to be maintained that Presbyterianism exists by divine right, but not by sole or exclusive right, as a mode of government *agreeable to Scripture*.

It would be vain to attempt in these studies a presentation, even in the most meager outline, of the specific evidences on which this claim of scripturalness is based. The various proofs adduced in the American Form of Gov. and still more extensively in the original Form, are certainly sufficient to establish, if not an exclusive jure divino authority, still a substantial warrant for the Presbyterian system as justified for substance in the New Testament. There is distinct evidence for the belief that many of the earliest Christian churches were in fact, as Whateley (Kingdom of Christ) suggests, simply synagogues of converted persons, provided already with a body of officials styled elders, or elders of the people; and that in such cases the apostles, as he says, would merely introduce whatever added regulations might be requisite in conjunction with the new faith, leaving the machinery of administration substantially unchanged,—the membership being thus by training Presbyterians before they became Christians.

Starting from this Hebraic germ, it is natural to infer from the biblical statements that, wherever converts were subsequently won from Judaism in Western Asia or in Eastern Europe, provision was made for administration of this type by Paul, and by Timothy and Titus and others engaged primarily in the task of winning disciples among their Jewish brethren, and of organizing them when thus converted, into Christian churches. Nor is it unreasonable to believe, on the basis of facts recorded in Scripture, that this mode was accepted and established among Gentile converts also, wherever the Gospel found footing, as in Corinth and Rome,—though doubtless modified at some points by the strong influence of Roman government and Roman usage. That exact uniformity prevailed, resting on explicit divine authority and rigorously enforced everywhere as such, cannot be shown from Scripture, neither can it be justified on rational grounds by any who take fully into account all the circumstances and conditions in the case. But that churches substantially Presbyterian,

and in course of time larger organizations of the same type, did actually spring into being, first on Jewish then on Gentile soil, is a fact at least strongly suggested in the inspired records of the apostolic century, and certainly justified by ample evidences during the subsequent century or two, before imperialism in any form had struck its cancerous roots into the organic body of Christ: Bannerman, Scripture Doctrine of the Church.

Passing through the long and dark period of papal absolutism, and ascending to the brighter era of the Reformation, we discover gradually rising into view in Protestant lands and especially in Great Britain, three general types of church administration, the Episcopal, the Independent, and the Presbyterian,—all proposing themselves as legitimate substitutes for that hierarchal despotism against which all Protestants were earnestly arrayed, and each claiming for itself exclusive biblical warrant, even to the extent of challenging at times the right of churches otherwise organized to bear the name of Christian. We are well aware that some of the most injurious discords of Protestantism originated around this ecclesiastical issue: while this conflict of polities continued, it was impossible for the Protestant cause to reach its highest measure of vigor or to gain the largest success. The various phases of that intestine conflict need not be portrayed, as it went on during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was continued, though with lessening bitterness, into the nineteenth century. It was only as men came to see at length that in fact Christian churches could live and prosper and do valuable work for Christ and his cause under either of these types of administration in their several varieties, and under all of these in similar measure, that the dogma of a divine right inhering exclusively in either, gradually faded away. And it surely is one of the grandest facts of our time, that the point has now been reached substantially where each of these types may be regarded and cherished as Christian, and where their profound points of agreement, as well as the elements of difference, may be freely and happily recognized.

All alike hold to the generic doctrine of the church as a divine institution, appointed of God for a sublime work and career in the world, and endowed by him with a supernatural, a gracious, a truly cosmic mission to humanity. All are agreed as to the essential nature of that mission, as being a proclamation of grace and salvation through a divine Mediator, and by means of the supernatural Word concerning him and his mediatorial relations to our fallen race. All are agreed as to the headship of Christ in his church, to the supremacy of the divine law, to the obligation

to observe the sacraments, to the fact of the divine ordinances such as the Sabbath, and to the duty and privilege of worship, in whatever variety of mode. It would be needless here to detail all those forms of agreement in doctrine, in practice and in experience, by which the various branches of Protestantism are in fact as truly one as if they were, like Rome, one outward and visible organism. It is enough for us now to note that these agreements, doctrinal, practical and experimental, are infinitely more fundamental, more weighty and more precious, than are the ecclesiastical technics in which the Protestant bodies still differ.

It is especially imperative upon us as Presbyterians to note and study well these important points of agreement as well as those of difference between our preferred type of polity and all others existing side by side with it in the broad Protestant domain. Presbyterianism agrees, for example, with strict Independency in affirming the parity of the ministry, the biblical warrant for the diaconate as an administrative agency, and the right of each church to rule itself under the supreme jurisdiction of Christ. It agrees with modified Independency, or Congregationalism, in recognizing the proper affiliation of contiguous churches of like belief, and the importance of practical fellowship in some form among these several households of faith. It agrees with Episcopacy in upholding the doctrine of the unity of the whole church of Christ, and exalting the ministry as a divine office and order within that church, though granting to it no independent prerogative or power. It agrees still more obviously in both usage and spirit with that modified Episcopacy which, under the name of Methodism, has proved itself one of the most effective as well as popular varieties of church administration in these later times. It agrees also with Lutheranism in its consistorial organization as composed of both ministers and laymen, and in its episcopal superintendency of ministers and churches, though without the formal office of the bishopric as existing in some Lutheran communities. It agrees in general with the democratic or popular rather than the sacerdotal conception of church government, yet appropriates and embodies some desirable features which that conception in its better varieties represents. In general it occupies an intermediate position between antithetic polities, borrowing from these some valuable elements, yet possessing some good qualities which they do not so well exhibit. While it has some obvious defects and liabilities, and while it may be so administered as to become an injury rather than a benefit, and even an instrument of tyranny, it fairly deserves the encomium pronounced upon it by an

American commentator (Beattie, Presbyterian Standards), as securing well corporate unity, orderly procedure, individual freedom and justice to all sacred interests: also as providing for the harmonious balance and consistent operation of all these factors, in such ways as to make it the symbol of both law and liberty, order and organization.

12. Headship of Christ in the church: Supremacy of the Scriptures.

In meditating on the generic conception of the Church Visible as presented in this interesting chapter, it is important to bear steadily in mind the two grand facts which lie at the foundation of all worthy church government, the headship of Christ and the supreme authority of the inspired Word—the heavenly Ruler and his sovereign law. This is not that generic headship which is theologically ascribed to Christ, in contrast with the headship of Adam—a headship over our redeemed humanity, but rather that more specific relation which he sustains toward his organized people. In the chapter on Christ as Mediator, we were taught that God gave him even from eternity a people to be his seed, and made him to be the Head and Savior of his church. In the present chapter it is said that there is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Larger Catechism (52–54) he is declared to fill this high place for the justification of his people, and to gather and defend his church, subdue its enemies, and accomplish all the glorious ends which such headship involves. The Form of Government affirms that, being now himself exalted above all principality and power, he hath erected in this world a kingdom which is his church, and that as its head he has appointed officers for the edification of the visible church which is his body. The American Book of Discipline starts out with the cardinal proposition, that Christ as its Lord and King has appointed a system of laws in and for his church universal; and then proceeds to unfold that system as resting in substance, though not in every detail, on his authority alone.

The doctrine makes its appearance frequently in the earlier creeds. The Second Helvetic Confession (XVII), the French Conf. and the Scotch Conf. also, declare the church to be always the body and spouse of Christ Jesus, who is its divine Head. It was not only natural but imperative that the Reformers, repudiating the claim of the hierarchy to jurisdiction over the household of faith, should fix their eyes solely on Him who was not only the justifier of them that believe, but also King and Lord over them

both individually and collectively. To him alone could they turn, not merely for providential protection from their enemies, and for guidance amid their difficult labors and struggles, but also for government—for a divine and gracious sovereignty that should control alike their activities and their lives. And certainly none among the earlier Reformers had greater occasion to affirm this truth and to build their faith upon it, than the Westminster Assembly, amid all the perplexities political as well as spiritual which were besetting them in the endeavor to do the work to which, as they believed, the great Head of the church had appointed them. As we read the history of that burdened and troubled age, when the British Isles were agitated from border to border, and the hearts of many were trembling lest the church and religion should utterly perish amid the convulsions of the times, we can comprehend in a measure the peculiar force of their earnest declaration, which even now sounds like a battle cry: There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ.

Other aspects of his comprehensive sovereignty have already been considered in the examination of his kingly office, regarded as a part of his Mediatorship. Contemplating this special sovereignty, wielded by him within and over his visible church, we discover that it rests, first of all, on what Christ himself is as the Son of God and our Immanuel, vested personally with all the inherent rights of Deity; secondly, on his possession of all those qualities and endowments which fit him to exercise such absolute dominion over his chosen people; thirdly, on the fact that he has himself created and organized the church, and has set it up before the world as his constituted representative and his visible kingdom; fourthly, on his equipment of the church with all the appointments, ordinances, qualifications requisite to its becoming such a kingdom, and thus acting representatively for him before the eyes of men; and fifthly, on the final fact that the church could neither accomplish its mission nor even continue to exist, if Christ had not thus actually seated himself on the throne in the presence of all his adoring people. On such grounds Protestantism has universally held for substance the doctrine of the Symbols as here presented. In the presence of this sublime headship, all types of Erastianism, which regard the church as subject to the civil power, its laws and officers and administration as amenable to the state, and its membership as made up of those who are subjects or citizens within the state, fade away as foggy exhalations vanish before the rising sun. The fact that there has been among Presbyterians no swerving from this high conception in recent

times, is illustrated in the Articles of the English Presbyterian Synod, which affirm that Christ is the sole head of his church, that all its powers and prerogatives are derived from him, and that all its functions, such as worship, teaching, government, are to be administered according to his will, and subject to his authority alone.

In conjunction with this gracious headship there should be emphasized the other cardinal fact, that the Bible is the only constitution, the only authoritative law and rule, within the Christian church. It is no more manifest that no other Head or Lord is needed, than that no other book of government is needful to the existence and efficiency of that spiritual organism. It is true that in all ages, and perhaps especially in this, the visible church requires a body of practical precepts, ordinances, statutes, usages, more or less extended and definite, in order to its proper effectiveness as an organization. Yet it is also true that no regulative enactment may properly be established in that church which is not in harmony with the general law laid down in the Scripture itself: whatever rule or custom is found to be contrary to the teaching of the Divine Word is, ipso facto, null and void. To the Law and to the Testimony, over against all merely human injunctions, must the final appeal be always made, on the ground, first, that the Scriptures are inspired, and are therefore infallible in their requisitions; secondly that they constitute in all cases a clear and adequate guide for the regulation of church life; thirdly, that the Head of the church has himself stamped them with his personal seal as being the one and only constitution for his organized people; and fourthly, that in no other way can the church be preserved from the invasion of human ordinances claiming divine warrant, be protected from internal discords and disruptions, and be happily instructed in all that pertains either to its inward life or to its outward efficiency and influence.

The Bible is thus not only, as is often said, the religion of Protestants; it is also the Magna Charta of the church, its inspired constitution and its only code of laws. Under the Hebraic dispensation God was wont to reveal his will to his people by miraculous manifestations, such as the Shekinah or the mysterious Urim and Thummim, but in the Christian dispensation miracles are no longer needful; the written Word, clear, pure, divinely endorsed, is sufficient. Cunningham (Hist. Theol.) lays down the broad and unquestionable proposition, that God fitted and intended his Word to be the full and adequate guide to his church in the execution of all its functions and in the

discharge of all its duties. The church may indeed define the provisions of Scripture, and may indicate specific applications of its general principles, but it may add nothing thereto by way of authoritative legislation. In the opening chapter of the Confession it is emphatically said that, while some things may be ordered *by the light of nature and Christian prudence*, yet these must be in harmony with the general rules of Scripture, *which are always to be observed*. The Holy Spirit is indeed to be invoked as an authoritative guide in the understanding of this divine rule, but the Spirit commends only what the Word has first spoken, and the utterance of the Word is always the utterance of Christ.

We stand here on the confines of what, from the very beginnings of Protestantism, has been a region of positive, sometimes rancorous, intestinal controversy. Around the doctrine of the headship of Christ arose the issues which led to the outbreak of the anabaptist heresies, and to the civil wars which deluged Germany with fratricidal blood. Around that doctrine, especially as related to the asserted authority of the civil magistracy within the religious sphere, sprang up much of the bitter struggle between ecclesiastical schools and parties in England, and many of the battles and disruptions in Scottish Presbyterianism. It can hardly be said that European Protestantism has even yet been able to draw satisfactory lines of jurisdiction between the kingdoms of this world and that kingdom of Christ, which all true disciples regard and extol as forever supreme in its authority over the household of faith. The divines of Westminster came nearer than any of their predecessors to the solution of this complicate problem, and their high doctrine may be fairly regarded as a close approach to the full and pure ideal. Yet we have had occasion to see how far short they themselves fell in the application of their doctrine; and the history of more recent Presbyterianism, American as well as British, shows too plainly that the ideal which they portrayed has not even yet been reached in practice. Similar conflicts which cannot here be named, have arisen in many quarters respecting the interpretation of the Bible teaching as to the church, and especially respecting the manner and extent of the application of biblical principles to church life. The various branches of Protestantism are as yet very far from being agreed, or even thoroughly tolerant with one another, at this point. Still the fundamental fact remains that, as all recognize the headship of Christ as the heavenly ruler, so his Word must be accepted universally as the sufficient and the supreme law. In the more faithful study and wiser use of that Word, and thus alone, can

be found the quieting of all discussions, the solution of every problem, the end of ecclesiastical conflict.

In the presence of the elevated and spiritual conception of the Church thus far presented in the Symbols, it seems strange to come upon the startling proposition in the fifth section of this chapter that, *the purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error,*—

13. Purity of the Church: the church of Rome: Papal polity condemned.

followed by the still more startling statement that *some churches have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ but synagogues of Satan.* The first of these clauses carries us back to the controversies of the early Church, such as the schisms of Felicissimus and Novatian, and the long struggle between Augustine and the Donatists respecting the proper qualifications for church membership. It recalls to mind the conflicts of the sixteenth century between Luther and Calvin on one side, and the Anabaptists and other similar errorists bearing the Protestant name. It reminds us also of the struggles between the various ecclesiastical parties in England, the confused intermingling of theory and practice respecting church membership, the distraction among the diverse parties in the Assembly itself. That there was a strange amount of mixture upon mixture in British Protestantism, was a fact which the Assembly could not fail to acknowledge: that there was also something of error incorporated in the doctrines, and still more palpably embodied in the living of the various sects and denominations in Britain, was a fact even more obvious to their view. The divines of the Assembly did not claim exemption from such mixture and such error even among themselves whether as individuals or as a body, as we may easily learn from their records. They also knew well what had been the painful history of the Christian church as to the commingling of good fish and bad fish in the net, the inextricable blending of wheat and tares in the field of grace, even from the days of Christ and his apostles. They knew how constantly, although in theory the church was composed of none but saints, evil men and evil influences had made their way into it, and had corrupted alike its purity and its efficiency. And therefore in describing the church visible, as distinct from the church invisible, they were constrained in all honesty to say for their own communion as for others: The purest churches under heaven are *subject both to mixture and error.*

But the acknowledged imperfections of the various Protestant bodies in Europe, serious as some of these were, would not have

justified the further affirmation of the Assembly, that some churches *have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ but synagogues of Satan.* There could have been but one ecclesiastical organization to which such language could apply—the corrupted church of Rome, which not many decades before had obtained sway in England under Mary, and had then made manifest before the eyes of all its dreadful degeneracy, if not its apostacy from the apostolic model. As they had read the story of its persecutions, its formalism, and its lack of religious vitality—as they had traced the records of its ambitious attempts to rule the British Isles in the interest of the papacy, even by methods wholly inconsistent with the principles and temper of true Christianity, they had been led to regard it as no church of Christ and even to pronounce it, in the solemn language of the Apocalypse, a synagogue of Satan. The earlier Reformers had not hesitated to employ such language, and even to claim that it was the Roman church specifically which the ascended Savior had in mind when addressing his messages to the seven churches of western Asia. Those who have read the terrible arraignment of that church in the Institutes of Calvin, or the impetuous and sweeping condemnation of it in the National Covenant of the Kirk of Scotland, will comprehend the full significance of the language here employed.

The question whether the church of Rome is a part of the visible Church of Christ on earth, or is to be utterly cast out as a veritable synagogue of Satan, can be best considered in the light of the following Section (vi) which affirms that the pope of Rome cannot in any sense be regarded as the head of the church, but is rather to be condemned as *that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ* and all that is called God. If the arraignment of the Roman communion by Calvin be justly described as terrible, a hundred fold more terrible is his scholarly, profound and merciless impeachment of the papacy (Inst. B. IV : 5–11) as a mode of church government, and of the irreligious men who in the era of the Reformation and before had filled the papal chair. He charges the papacy with entirely subverting the ancient type of church government, with asserting a primacy to which it was not entitled, with an assumption of power which is destructive of liberty within the church, with corrupting purity of doctrine and introducing licentious perversions of the truth, with tyrannizing over both the souls and the bodies of men, and with assuming an abusive jurisdiction in civil spheres wholly unwarranted by Scripture or by

the rule and usage of ancient Christianity. Luther and Zwingli had denounced the reigning popes, exposed the priestly orders, condemned unsparingly the men and parties who upheld the papal assumptions, pronounced the papal communion corrupt *in capite et membris*, and on this side had dealt blows upon the papacy as a polity which it was well nigh impossible to resist. But it was left to Calvin, with an invective even more intense, but in more logical form and with an irresistible force of argument, to attack the papacy as a system, and to prove at least to all the Protestant world that, however the Christian church might be governed, it could never accept the domination of Rome, except at the cost of spiritual destruction. Two centuries may have led to some modification of his reasonings, but have in no degree impaired the substance or the energy of his mighty argument. The Westminster divines accepted it as it stood, and formulated their doctrine accordingly,—doubtless stimulated by the aggressions of the papacy upon both the civil and the religious institutions of their own country; and therefore while simply suggesting that the Roman communion was very far corrupted and might possibly be a synagogue of Satan in the apocalyptic sense, they openly declared the pope to be *antichrist*, and even the man of sin and son of perdition condemned in Holy Writ.

Protestantism since that day has often applied these fearful phrases not merely to the papacy as a system, but to the men who from time to time have filled the papal chair. But as in the days of John there were many antichrists, so now there are many forms of error or unbelief, both personal and impersonal, to which that fearful term might properly be applied. There are also now, as there have been in all the Christian centuries, many men of sin, many sons of perdition, such as those to whom Paul referred when he both warned the Thessalonian brethren against their influence, and comforted them by the assurance that the sway of such representatives of evil must be brief. To apply these terms exclusively to the papacy or to this or that pope personally, as if such special application was intended by the apostle, must be regarded as a departure from sound exegesis, and as well from Christian charity. That there are no other antichrists or men of sin or sons of perdition than are to be found within the Roman communion, is incredible: that there have been good, devout, Christian popes, it is certainly no undue stretch of charity to affirm. That all enemies to spiritual Christianity such as the apostle so tersely describes, will in due time be taken out of the way and destroyed, all Christian minds will rejoice to believe.

Respecting the papacy as a system of church government, there can be but one judgment among thoughtful Protestants in this age. Its assumption of the right to rule over the church as the successor and representative of the apostolic college, its asserted supremacy as a hierarchal organism, its presumptuous dictation of doctrine and affirmation of infallibility in judgment respecting spiritual truth, its haughty sacerdotalism and pretentious display, and many other characteristic elements, conspire to prove it radically at variance with the teaching and temper of Christianity. We have already had occasion to note the emphasis with which the Westminster divines declared that the pope possessed no rightful power or jurisdiction over men within the civil sphere. But it is incomparably more important to reject absolutely his claim to power or jurisdiction within the religious sphere. The church is indeed in one sense a sovereignty more imperial than that of any political state; but there is no other head, no other sovereign within that holy dominion, but the Lord Jesus Christ. While therefore we may set aside the exegesis which applies to the pope as a person the strong terms of condemnation just alluded to, we may as Protestants adopt without hesitancy the modified and temperate language of the recently proposed Revision of the Confession: The claim of the pope of Rome or of any other human authority, to be the vicar of Christ and the head of the Church universal, is without warrant in Scripture or in fact, and is a usurpation dishonoring to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The question whether the Roman church, though thus unscripturally governed, is after all a Christian church, must be answered affirmatively. It has already been mentioned that the French Confession, written under the influence of Calvin, declared its belief that some trace of the true Church remained in the papal communion, inasmuch as the virtue and substance of baptism survived in it. Calvin himself went farther than this, affirming that there are true churches within that communion, notwithstanding the papal domination over them. The pope has profaned them, he says, by sacrilegious impiety, afflicted them by cruel despotism, corrupted and almost terminated their existence by false and pernicious doctrines like poisonous potions. In such churches, he adds, Christ lies half buried, the Gospel is suppressed, piety exterminated, and the worship of God almost abolished. Yet, he concludes, these are churches, inasmuch as God has wonderfully preserved among them a remnant of his people, though miserably dispersed and dejected, and as there still remain some marks of the church, especially those the efficacy of

which neither the craft of the devil nor the malice of men can ever destroy. It can hardly be claimed that this wise judgment of Calvin met universal acceptance in Protestant circles. In some instances at least, the definition of the true church was so shaped in the creeds as to exclude the church of Rome, if not formally at least by implication. Yet on the other hand the Thirty-Nine Articles are content with saying (XIX), that the church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of ceremonies, but also in matters of faith. The Irish Articles (79) denounce the papal rule as a usurped power, contrary to the Scriptures and Word of God, and contrary to the example of the primitive church, but pronounce no condemnation on the Roman church itself.

If we may judge from the tenor of the debates as recorded, and from the general temper of the Assembly toward Romanism as it was seeking to become again dominant in England, it seems natural to infer that the Westminster Assembly, had it spoken, would have expressed the severer view—would have said explicitly that the Roman church had so far degenerated as to be no longer a church of Christ but rather a synagogue of Satan. And probably this opinion still extensively prevails among the adherents of the Confession, as in other Protestant circles. Still the judgment of Calvin will justify itself on close examination, not merely on the specific basis named by him or by the French Conf. but on the still broader ground that there is much in the creed of Rome, and much also in the religious experience of many Romanists, which justifies the recognition of that church, though greatly profaned, afflicted, corrupted, poisoned, dejected and despised—to use his intense expressions—as a true branch of the one holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ. Holding to the doctrine of the three ancient creeds as to God and the Trinity, to Christ as incarnate Deity, to the Scriptures as a divine revelation and law for the guidance of men, to the primal facts of sin and guilt, and the possibility of redemption in and through Christ as the ultimate source, and to the two great sacraments on which Christianity is so largely founded, that church may at least claim a considerable degree of recognition from the representatives of evangelical belief. As we may condemn the papacy as a system of government without denouncing the ruling pope as antichrist, so we may condemn the many and serious, almost mortiferous, errors of Rome, and yet believe that there are churches within that communion where, though Christ be half buried, the Gospel suppressed, and the worship of God almost abolished, he has

still preserved therein a holy seed—a seed that may hereafter spring up in the bloom of another Reformation, and bring forth in the ages to come another grand harvest to his eternal glory.

14. Future of the Christian Church: its permanence: laws of church growth.

Before we close these studies respecting the Church Visible as a divine organism, we may fitly pause for a moment to consider the future of this remarkable institution. Is the Christian church as here defined, like the Patriarchal or the Hebraic, to give way in time to some other supernatural organization and, like these preliminary churches, to live only as a tributary element flowing silently into the composition and life of some future institution, still grander in endowment and more glorious in mission? Is it ultimately to perish from among men as light and knowledge are increased,—the race having outgrown the need of its gracious disciplines and therefore setting it aside, just as progressing civilization has supplanted the primitive barbarisms of the world? Is it not rather to grow on and upward, retaining all its present qualities but developing with the ages, until it becomes the central, most distinctive and grandest institution of humanity—the church universal, apostolic in origin and purpose and doctrine, and catholic in faith and spirit, in the highest sense and measure described in the Pauline letters? And if it is thus to become permanent and grow into perfection, under what laws and by what processes shall this sublime result be brought to pass?

The question respecting a millennium to come to the human race, as the issue of its long period of experience and development under the action of grace, and respecting also the second coming of our Lord in conjunction with such millennium, may best be considered in full under the general head of Eschatology, as presented in the two closing chapters of the Confession and elsewhere. It will be sufficient here to note the fact that the Symbols nowhere propose any other issue than the continuous growth of the Christian church during the ages to come, through the agency of the same divine forces, and essentially by the same methods which are now employed, until it shall triumph over all obstacles, put to silence all unbelief, overcome all irreligion and all false religions, and become in fact the one enduring institution of our humanity—the one Church of God, including among its adherents generically all the tribes and races of men. This certainly was the conviction and expectation of the Reformers generally,—narrowed indeed by their very defective conceptions

of the great work of Christian missions, yet held steadfastly before them as a revealed promise and hope. One interesting illustration of this appears where perhaps we might least expect it, in the canons of the controversial Synod of Dort, in the broad declaration that the promise of everlasting life through grace and the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations.

The belief of the divines of Westminster is very clearly indicated in the catechetic answers (189–196) appended to the several petitions in the Lord's Prayer, and especially to the second petition, *Thy Kingdom Come.* We are taught in this petition to pray that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, and the Gospel propagated throughout the world,—that the Jews may be converted as a race, and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in,—that to this end, the church may be furnished with officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, qualified to proclaim and dispense the true religion, and be made effectual both in converting sinners and edifying the saints,—that Christ may by these means hasten the time of his second coming, and may be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world as may best conduce to these glorious ends. Nor are these strong statements to be regarded as unique. What is said in the Confession respecting the functions of Christ as Mediator and King, respecting the nature and aim of the Gospel as a scheme of saving truth, respecting the influence and work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the Gospel, and respecting also the obligation of believers to make the plan of salvation known to all men, implies just such a consummation as is depicted in the Catechism. In the original Directory for Worship also, we are instructed to pray specifically for the propagation of the Gospel and Kingdom of Christ among all nations, for the conversion of the Jews and the fullness of the Gentiles, and for the fall of antichrist and the hastening of the second coming of our Lord. In the beneficent provisions of more recent Presbyterianism, both British and American, for missions domestic and foreign and for other forms of evangelistic effort, and in the prayers and gifts and activities of the living churches bearing that name wherever planted, we have conclusive proof that the clear doctrine of the Symbols on this general subject has been neither misapprehended nor ignored. Presbyterianism by its very nature as well as by its ancestral training is everywhere a propagative agency, believing heartily in the possible and the promised conversion of the world to Christ, and consecrating itself freely to this sublime end.

Accepting this conclusion on confessional as well as biblical authority, we are led directly to the more specific inquiry respecting the processes requisite to this growth toward universality, the forces to be engaged in it, and the laws and methods by which it is to be carried on unto the promised consummation. It is not to be supposed that such growth will occur without regulative law or any recognizable process. A tree unfolding into beauty and maturity, a temple rising to completeness by continuous accretions, a human body passing from an infantile to a matured condition, a household inwardly evolved by progressive births, a state or kingdom developed by constitutional methods through the will and efforts of its citizens or subjects,—these are the illustrations employed in Scripture to describe the growth of the Christian church, and each and all of them imply a plan unfolding itself, a procedure according to effective laws. Nor is this development to come to pass under the action of human rules and human agencies only; its holy development and its beautiful maturing are divinely ordered and divinely produced. Two primary and comprehensive laws of church growth may here be briefly noted:

First: the interior law of growth by what may be described as spiritual propagation. Luther said that God has three times introduced his scheme of grace through a single family,—as if one such household, thoroughly sanctified by the indwelling presence of religion, would become an expanding germ through whose holy vitalities all the families of the earth should be blessed. Bushnell (Christian Nurture) describes God as from the first looking for a godly seed, and inserting such laws of population that piety itself shall finally overpopulate the world. It is an obvious fact of history that the pious household has been richly blessed of God as the primary agency utilized by him in extending the sphere and the influence of piety among men. But every Christian church is thus a holy family, a propagative agency in the interest of religion, first inheriting grace and then in turn by various processes diffusing and perpetuating that grace in the world. In other words, every church is divinely set upon the task of providing for its own permanence and expansion, by the training within its hallowed circle of generation after generation of disciples. It was by this process chiefly, that the Abrahamic was expanded into the Jewish, and this in turn into the Christian church. It has been largely by this method that the apostolic church has become the church of humanity,—already represented by tens of thousands of particular churches inheriting its mission

and spirit, and continuing the same gracious method of propagation throughout the earth.

We are already familiar with the fact that the church of Rome has availed itself largely, though in a gross form, of this cardinal principle of interior development, and has secured its increase, especially since the Reformation, not by accessions from Protestantism or any outward source, but rather by the careful infolding within its broadening area of each new generation of membership. It has claimed as its own every child born within its communion and on which its baptismal consecration has been bestowed, and in this way chiefly has continued the succession of its adherents age after age. We also know as a matter of history that the churches of the Reformation grew at first and expected to grow by this interior process chiefly,—increasing not so much by captures from Romanism or from the unbelieving world, as by the training of successive generations of children in the experience and inheritance of grace. The numerous Catechisms, from those of Luther and Heidelberg down to those of Westminster, and the almost universal practice of catechetical instruction both in the family and in the congregation, are striking evidences of this general fact. One of the most interesting debates in the Assembly (Minutes, 91–95) related to the best mode of what Reynolds happily described as ingenerating knowledge in the young through catechetic discipline. It is also obvious historically that those branches of Protestantism which have adhered closely to this method of increase, have attained the largest growth and secured the broadest religious influence. It must be confessed, however, that in some Protestant communions, as in the the church of Rome, this interior law has wrought injurious as well as beneficial results,—specially through the ignoring of the fundamental truth, that complete or absolute connection with the church of Christ is possible only through actual, personal repentance and faith in Christ himself. To increase the church by outward processes only, such as baptism or confirmation, or to require only compliance with certain external conditions or professions, will inevitably weaken rather than strengthen it. Just at this point a Judaising formalism has worked and is still working serious injury to Protestant Christianity. It should ever be counted a fundamental proposition, that saving faith in Christ is after all the sole, universal, essential and perpetual condition of complete church membership,—as truly for the child nurtured within the household of faith, as for the adult transgressor brought in, convicted and penitent, as a capture from the sinful world.

Second: The exterior law of growth by spiritual conquest. Here we contemplate the church, not as a divine household developing and multiplying from within, but rather as a grand missionary agency, sent forth to win and possess the entire world of mankind for Christ. We have already noted the fact that such a conception of its mission was cherished though dimly in the earlier days of Protestantism. It is known, for illustration, that Erasmus and some others advocated openly the sending of the Gospel to the Mohammedans and to the heathen world generally. Luther and his immediate disciples evinced, so far as we know, but little practical interest in such missionary effort. As early as 1556, Calvin and the Genevan church undertook, in conjunction with Admiral Coligny, to establish a mission on the coast of Brazil; and three years later Gustavus Vasa sent missionaries to Lapland. Yet, when we remember that Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the order of Jesuits, was a contemporary of Luther, and that the scheme of church propagandism which he introduced had been carried out by Francis Xavier as a missionary to southern India and to China and far Japan twelve years before Calvin died, it seems strange that the Protestant organizations should have thought and done so little during the sixteenth century toward the carrying, not of a formalized church and a ceremonial Christianity, but of the gospel of faith in Christ alone, to the outlying heathen world. It was doubtless their vital struggle for life against papal aggressions, their strenuous effort for support and extension of territory through the civil power, their disputations over doctrine and polity, their lack of anything resembling the organized unity of Rome, and other like causes, that kept them from being as much as their fundamental principles would naturally have led them to be, missionary organizations, praying and laboring and making sacrifices for the conversion of the whole race of mankind.*

*It is a noteworthy fact that positive and practical interest in foreign missions began to be felt in Britain as early at least as the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Charter granted by James I. to the Virginia Colony in 1606, and also that conferred by Charles I. twenty years later on the Massachusetts Colony, contained explicit instructions in respect to missionary labor among the Indian tribes. It is a specially interesting fact, that one among the reasons urged for the convening of the Westminster Assembly was, that the means of propagating the Gospel and kingdom of Christ toward those that are yet in darkness might be agreed upon. During the year preceding the convocation of the Assembly, a petition was presented to Parliament, signed by a large number of English and Scotch divines, praying that steps might be taken for the propagation of the Christian faith

Nearly all branches of Protestantism are now agreed that every Christian church is, by virtue of its distinctive faith and structure as Protestant, a missionary agency no less than a regenerate family,—designed and fitted as such to grow by drawing into its circle those that are without, as well as by training unto holiness those who are within its sacred enclosure. And in like manner, every division of Protestantism has learned or is learning to regard itself as a missionary organization, qualified and commissioned for the same holy object on a more extensive scale. The world is, in the stirring phrase of Wesley, its parish, and the entire race of all conditions or classes or types are the proper subjects of its beneficent thoughts and efforts. This obligation is expressly laid upon the Christian church by its exalted Head, and is wrought into its very constitution in a sense so vital that, if it should cease to engage itself in this work, it would inevitably pass into a condition of collapse or of death. Romanism may devote itself to the upbuilding of a hierarchal organism and a formalized semblance of Christianity: Liberalism may in its pride assume a lofty indifference to the claims of degraded heathendom: Unbelief may scoff at the dream of bringing our fallen race back to purity and to God through such an instrumentality as the Gospel. But

in America and the West Indies. There is no record in the Minutes of any direct action by the Assembly in the matter, but there are many evidences of its profound faith and interest in the conversion of the world to Christianity. It is suggestive that the earliest missionary society in Britain was established by act of the Long Parliament in 1649, while the Assembly was still in session, for the avowed purpose of preaching the Gospel among the Indian tribes of New England, and for the maintenance of schools for the education of Indian children;—collections to be taken by authority of Parliament throughout England and Wales for the proper founding, as was said, of so pious and great an undertaking.

Perhaps the earliest recorded instance of ecclesiastical action among Protestants on the continent, in the interest of missions to the pagan world, appears in the POST-ACTA of the Synod of Dort, addressed in 1619, to the Lords, the States General of the Provinces of the United Netherlands, in these terms:

Seeing that all true Christians are assuredly bound by the loving desire which they ought to feel for the salvation of their neighbor, and by zeal for the extension of the glory of God amongst mankind, to use all available means for accomplishing this end; and seeing that God has opened up a way for us in these lands to various distant lands in India and elsewhere, which are utterly destitute of the knowledge of the true God, the said Synod humbly petitions that your High Mightinesses would be pleased with Christian zeal to recall to mind this sacred obligation, and to give it your earnest and practical consideration, and for this end to order and arrange such means as shall be useful and most suitable for the propagation of the Holy Gospel in the lands in question.

evangelical Protestantism universally cherishes a higher aim—is conscious of a grander mission to the race. Growth by spiritual conquest is its constant and universal law. And certainly it may be anticipated that growth by this process as well as by inward expansion will become more and more marked, more and more effectual, as the world moves on toward the consummation predicted for it in Scripture and in the Symbols. No other instrumentality or influence can rival or supersede the Christian church in this cosmic mission. If religion is indeed to be propagated throughout the world now pagan,—if the Jews now so averse are to be brought into obedience to Christ,—if the fullness of the Gentiles are to flock unto him as doves to their windows,—if the kingdom of sin and Satan is indeed to be destroyed and the kingdom of God advanced and made supreme on the earth, it is the Church of Christ with its dauntless faith, its consecrated zeal, its willing and generous effort and sacrifice,—the Church of Christ, as distinguished from all social or civil agencies, and from all that merely secular civilization can accomplish, that must bring to pass these glorious results. And on the other hand it is safe to prophesy that when evangelical Protestantism learns to recognize cordially those things which all Protestants hold as really essential in doctrine and polity and worship,—when not only toleration but loving consent is granted to whatever is not thus essential,—when all selfish or schismatic rivalry and faction are put away, and charity in its broadest form is cherished alike by all,—and when all are engaged together in the holy task of proclaiming the one Christ to all the world, the redemption of our lost race will surely follow.

LECTURE THIRTEENTH—SACRAMENTS, ORDINANCES, WORSHIP.

SACRAMENTS: BAPTISM, LORD'S SUPPER: ORDINANCES: SABBATH, SANCTUARY, MEANS OF GRACE, MINISTRY: WORSHIP: PREACHING AND HEARING, PRAISE, PRAYER: RITUAL AND LITURGY.

C. F. CH. XXI: XXVII–XXIX. L. C. 154–196. S. C. 88–107. FORM OF GOV. CH. IV: XIV–XV. DIRECT. FOR WORSHIP, CH. III–X: XII–XV.

In the presentation of the clear and strong doctrine of the Symbols respecting the Church of God on earth, it has seemed expedient to reserve for separate consideration certain elements or features by which that Church is still more decisively differentiated from all other organizations,—its peculiar sacraments, its associated ordinances, and its characteristic worship. For several reasons these three subjects in their various ramifications command at once the special attention and interest of the student of Christian symbolism. It was within this department of doctrine and duty that some of the earliest questions at issue between the Roman communion and the primitive Reformers originated. It was within this territory that the Reformers came upon those primary disagreements among themselves which in their development led to the division of Protestantism into parties and sections, more or less diverse if not antagonistic. It is within this specific domain that the Protestant churches both Lutheran and Reformed have had since the Reformation, and are still having, some of their most exciting and injurious issues, and it is within this ecclesiastical area that some of the most important adjustments must be secured, some of the most profound harmonies be sounded, if Protestantism is ever so far unified as to be duly prepared and endowed for its signal mission to the race. One impressive illustration of the significance of the topics thus introduced appears—as we shall have frequent occasion to note—in the prominence given to them in the various Protestant formularies, from the creed of Augsburg and the Catechism of Luther down to the Catechisms and Confession of Westminster. Four entire chapters in the Confession, and an equal proportion in both Catechisms, and nine

chapters in the Directory for Worship, with numerous references elsewhere, show how special was the emphasis laid on these topics by the Assembly.

Taking up the first of the three general subjects named, the Christian Sacraments, we turn at once to the elaborate chapter (XXVII) in the Confession, setting forth the doctrine in detail and with marked precision. In successive sections this chapter defines these sacraments, indicates with fullness their nature and warrant, describes their spiritual efficacy and values, names the proper agency in their administration, and defines their number and their historic relation to the kindred sacraments appointed under the Hebraic dispensation. Similar definitions of the sacraments, more or less full, are found in most of the earlier creeds: not only the Lutheran but also the two Helvetic, the French and Belgic, and the Scotch Confessions. The Heidelberg Catechism (66) affirms in practical terms that the sacraments are visible, holy signs and seals appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof he may the more fully declare and seal unto us the promise of the Gospel. The Thirty-Nine Articles (XXV) say that the sacraments ordained of Christ be not only tokens and badges of the Christian profession, but are sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and of the good will of God toward us, by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him. It will be evident to the student of these antecedent formularies that the Westminster divines compiled their doctrine from them all, selecting what was best in each and omitting what seemed doubtful or unimportant. Their own admirable definition appears first more fully in the Confession, but in briefer form in both of the Catechisms: Sacraments are *holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace*, immediately instituted by God to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him; as also to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to his Word. In the Catechisms it is said that the sacraments are instituted by Christ himself, and the objects sought in them are described, particularly in the Larger Catechism, somewhat more specifically, though with no essential variation. Taken together, these statements present the most full and elaborate and at the same time the least challengeable definition which Protestantism even down to our own time has furnished.

1. The Christian Sacraments: their nature and authority: the papal error.

The underlying ground and reason for the Christian sacraments must be found in their unique relation to the redemptive scheme. They were not instituted simply in view of the fact that we naturally discern spiritual things most easily through the medium of such visible representations. They have their occasion and need in human sinfulness, and in the spiritual blindness which such sinfulness induces. They rest, in a word, on the same basis as the incarnation. Their great primary purpose is to exhibit in visible and significant form the blessings bestowed through the mediation of Christ upon all who truly believe in him. And this exhibition is made in order to confirm the faith of believers, to give them greater assurance respecting their personal salvation, and to strengthen them in their Christian graces and in the discharge of all their duties toward the Savior and toward one another as members together of his spiritual household. On this ground these ordinances are directly associated with the Word and the Holy Spirit and with the other ordained means of grace, as important if not indispensable helps in the Christian life. In connection with this primary purpose several others are here suggested, such as the pledge or covenant of consecration to the divine service which the recipient is supposed to make in the sacrament, the bond of union thus established between those who share together in these benefits, and the closer unification of the church as an organism in and through the gracious discipline herein afforded. It is also an important service rendered by the sacraments as being, in the language of the Thirty-Nine Articles, tokens and badges of the Christian profession,—visibly distinguishing Christians from those that are without, and making more broad and distinct the lines that separate the church from the world. Augustine has well said that men cannot be united in any profession of religion, whether true or false, unless they are connected by some communion of visible signs or sacraments.

The declaration that the sacraments are *immediately instituted by God* to represent Christ, as stated in the Confession, or are *instituted by Christ in his Church*, as the Catechism states it, is intended to bring out the radical difference between the Protestant and the Roman view of these sacred ordinances. Protestantism and Romanism are substantially agreed on certain points,—that the sacraments belong by divine appointment not to the individual believer but to the church, and to the Christian church as distinct from the Jewish,—that they are in some sense symbolic, designed to be visible signs of certain spiritual truths,—and that there is a divinely instituted connection between the

outward sign and the invisible reality of grace which it was appointed to represent. But according to Protestantism there must always be direct instruction from the Head of the church—a formal institution or establishment by God in Christ for the authoritative guidance of his people. According to the Roman view, whatever has a general warrant in the New Testament is a sacrament, though Christ may not have immediately or directly designated it as such. Under the former statement, there can be but two sacraments in the Christian church, baptism and the eucharist—both of which have the immediate seal of Christ upon them as they are enjoined in the New Testament: the supper being arranged by him personally even in detail in order to commemorate his death, and baptism being contained explicitly in his final injunction to preach the Gospel to every creature.

Lutheranism was at first disposed to regard absolution as a third sacrament (Apologia), but in the maturer Lutheran teaching it was recognized as a legitimate usage only. Under the Roman definition, which is also (Longer Cat. 285) that of the Greek communion, five other sacraments are discernible in the New Testament; confirmation, penance, ordination, matrimony and extreme unction,—minor indeed as compared with baptism and the supper, yet in their nature sacramental, and therefore obligatory, so far as they are needful or practicable, by the mandate of the church. At some periods in medieval Christianity a still larger number of such minor sacraments were ecclesiastically imposed. In the creed of the Old Catholic Union (Art. VIII) while the five sacraments are recognized as in some sense obligatory, it is admitted that they rest their claim, not on the Scriptures or even on holy tradition coming down from the apostles or from the earliest times, but simply on theological speculation: in other words, they are ecclesiastical inferences rather than biblical requisitions. Two essential elements are seen to be lacking in these minor sacraments, the divine institution on one hand and the symbolic quality on the other. Confirmation and ordination are simply modes of admission to the church or of official investiture within it: matrimony is a religious as well as a civil ceremony, but has in it no sacramental element: churchly penance as distinct from evangelical repentance has no claim whatever as sacramental; and extreme unction is equally void of divine authoritativeness. To regard any of these usages as sacraments is to degrade the biblical conception, and to impose on the believer obligations which the New Testament nowhere enjoins. As sacred symbols they have no significance such as we discern

in baptism and the supper; as churchly impositions they may be perverted, as history has abundantly shown, into occasions of error and mischief.

It will be apparent that under the Protestant definition the real value of the Christian sacraments lies, not in what they are in themselves as visible signs merely, but in the saving truths which they symbolize, and in the appropriation of these truths by faith. In the second and third sections of this chapter it is expressly stated that there is *a spiritual relation between the sign and the thing signified*—the truths set forth in it; and that the grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments is *not conferred by any power in them*, but simply through the truth received and the ministry of the Spirit therewith. It is said that there is *a promise of benefit to worthy receivers*, rightly using these sacred ordinances in obedience to the divine precept authorizing such use; and in the Catechisms these spiritual benefits are fully described. There is also in the second section a direct reference to the Roman error respecting efficacy inherent in the ordinances themselves as channels or vehicles of grace: *the names and effects of the truths signified* being, it is said, *sometimes attributed to the sign*, as if that were of itself efficacious. The Greek church illustrates this error in the statement (Longer Cat. 284) that a sacrament is a holy act through which grace—or, in other words, the saving power of God,—works mysteriously upon man. This formulary proceeds to an explanation of the way in which the seven sacraments thus work immediately upon the recipients; affirming that in baptism they are mysteriously born into a spiritual life,—that in confirmation (or unction with chrism) the baptized person receives in and through the holy oil the gift of the Holy Ghost,—that in the communion he is spiritually fed, as if with or by the sacred elements,—that in penance he is healed of spiritual diseases, or of sin,—that in ordination he receives grace spiritually to regenerate, feed and nurture others,—and in general that the receiver is operated upon graciously by the materials of the sacraments as if they were themselves spiritual agencies, sacred medicines, mysteriously imparting healing and life and salvation.

The Roman dogma closely resembles this in essence, though not in form. According to the Tridentine Catechism, as defined by Moehler, the outward sign by a divine ordinance not only typifies but works holiness and justice into the soul,—the sacraments, by reason of their character as institutions prepared by Christ for our salvation, themselves becoming so many vehicles by which grace is carried into the moral nature, first to renew and

then to sanctify and strengthen. In the language of the Council of Trent (Session Seventh), through these holy sacraments all justice (or righteousness) either begins, or being begun is increased, or being lost is repaired. The Council also decreed in its accompanying canons that, if any one should say that grace is not thus conferred by the sacraments *ex opere operato*, but that faith in the divine promise alone is sufficient to procure such grace; or if any one should say that in baptism and confirmation and ordination there is not imprinted in the soul an indelible character, which needs never to be repeated; or if any one should say that the sacraments are merely outward signs of grace received by faith—visible marks of the Christian profession by which believers are distinguished from others, let him be anathema.

It is thought that we may discern some approach toward this false doctrine showing itself in the clause already quoted from the Thirty-Nine Articles: By which God doth invisibly work in us, and doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith. This impression is doubtless deepened by those expressions in the Anglican liturgy which suggest the hypothesis of regenerative baptism. The early Lutheranism also was insensibly drawn in the same direction by its theory of a corporeal residence of Christ in, with and under the elements in the holy communion; with its natural consequence in some mysterious transfusion of Christ himself into the soul, as the believer receives the bread and the wine,—these being not indeed transubstantiated, as Rome affirmed, yet mystically inhabited by the ubiquitous Savior. But such views, so far as they have at any time been held, have given way substantially to the general doctrine of evangelical Protestantism, as defined in the Symbols and elsewhere. All Protestant churches would at the present time unite in reciting the temperate declaration of the Belgic Confession: We believe that our gracious God, on account of our weakness and infirmities, hath ordained the sacraments for us, thereby to seal unto us his promises, and to be pledges of the good will and grace of God towards us, and also to nourish and strengthen our faith which he hath joined to the word of the Gospel, the better to present to our senses both that which he signifies to us by his Word, and that which he works inwardly in our hearts; thereby assuring and confirming in us the salvation which he imparts to us.

Accepting this confessional declaration as to the positive instituting and divine warrant, and also as to the representative character and spiritual quality and uses of the Christian sacraments, we may briefly note the four remaining topics presented in this

chapter: First, the essential identity, as to the spiritual things signified and exhibited, between the two sacraments instituted by our Lord and the two preparatory sacraments, circumcision and the paschal supper, enjoined in the Old Testament. This identity will become more manifest as we pass on to the specific study of baptism and the eucharist, but the general resemblance should be noted even at this stage. The obvious fact in the case of the eucharist is that it sprang like a flower directly out of the soil supplied by that impressive observance which commemorated the deliverance from Egyptian bondage; and there are good reasons for viewing Christian baptism, regarded as an ordinance fitted to the need of humanity universally, as a happy substitute for that older observance which included in its range none but the Jewish race. Second: the obvious fact that the sacraments were designed by Christ to be not private but churchly ordinances. They are, in other words, essential constituents of his church, and their observance is perhaps the most characteristic act of the organized household of faith. It may be too much to say that a church which does not regard these ordinances is not a church of Christ: yet the fact that they have been recognized through all the centuries, and even by the most degenerate sections of Christendom as obligatory, shows clearly their proper claim, and their high value also, as true constituents of the Christian church according to the divine ideal.

Third: the important fact emphatically stated in the third section, that the efficacy of a sacrament *doth not depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it*, but only—as the Larger Catechism teaches, in harmony with the Reformed creeds generally—on the working of the Holy Ghost and the blessing of Christ by whom it is instituted. There were various reasons for such a statement. It was in part a reply to the papal assumption that none but the priesthood of Rome were legitimately empowered to administer the sacraments. It was undoubtedly designed also as a comfort to those who were in doubt as to the validity of their baptism, as having been administered by men whom they could no longer regard as true priests and ministrants under the Gospel. A more extended statement to the same effect appears in the Thirty-Nine Articles (XXVI), affirming that there are evil ministers within the church visible, but that these fill their office by the commission and authority of Christ; that therefore we may use their ministry in the assurance that the effect of the ordinances is not taken away by their wickedness; but rather that the sacraments become effectual through the

promise of Christ, even though they be administered by evil men.

Fourth: the sacraments, being thus of divine origin and authority, may not be neglected or ignored without culpability. Having such design and warrant, and being in themselves the ordained channels of such large blessing to all worthy recipients, the neglect or rejection of them cannot be otherwise than sinful. The two chapters (VIII–IX) in the American Directory, on the administration of Baptism and of the Supper, enforce this obligation in very practical and impressive ways; and among the sins against God named in the Catechisms, the neglect of these sacred ordinances occupies a prominent place. Protestantism does not affirm that the observance of them is in every case indispensable to salvation; even the Roman communion, according to Moehler, does not affirm this, since there are cases in which what he describes as invincible outward obstacles prevent such observance. In the case of evangelical bodies such as the orthodox Friends, who regard the duty as spiritual rather than formal, or of individual believers who may be deterred by defective views of these ordinances, or by the sense of personal unworthiness or other kindred cause, Christian charity must forbid our judgment or condemnation. Yet the warning of Moehler may fitly be uttered in the hearing of all: It is not for man to reject, according to his caprice, the salvation offered to him by Christ, or to prefer some other path of grace, since this must argue very gross presumption, and most culpable contempt of the divine ordinances.

2. Baptism: its nature, design and mode.

The comprehensive chapter on the Sacraments is followed in the Confession by an equally elaborate chapter (XXVIII) *Of Baptism*, presenting a full definition of this sacrament as to its nature and purpose, indicating the proper mode of its observance and the classes of persons to whom the ordinance may be applied, and describing to some extent its efficacy and value. Some of these topics are discussed with greater fullness in the two Catechisms, especially the Larger; and practical suggestions of similar tenor appear in the two Directories for Worship, British and American. Questions are suggested by these confessional representations which it would require volumes to discuss effectively: the condensed statement of the doctrine in its essential points is all that is practicable in this connection:

Baptism is declared to be a sacrament, according to the definition given in the chapter just considered,—an observance *ordained by Christ* for the benefit of his church, and therefore to be *continued*

in his church until the end of the world,—an ordinance designed first of all to signify the *admission of the party baptized into the visible church*, and therefore in its nature a public and churchly rather than a private observance. The Larger Catechism teaches (166) that baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so are strangers to the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him. It is also appointed as an authoritative *sign and seal of the covenant of grace*,—of ingrafting into Christ, and personal regeneration by his Spirit, and of the remission of sins and resurrection unto everlasting life. It also involves a covenant on the part of the recipient to give himself up wholly and openly to God in the service of Christ, to be faithful to his membership in the visible church, and to walk henceforth in newness of life as a cleansed and sanctified person. In other words, there is expressed in it on one side the fact of spiritual pollution, and of the need of regenerative grace, and on the other side the cordial acceptance of Christ as the only Redeemer of the soul. Comprehensively the sacrament represents both the interior depravation and the need of spiritual cleansing and recovery, and also the exterior forfeiture of divine favor and loss of the estate of acceptance with God; and at the same time graphically shadows forth both the restoration of the soul to a state of holiness through grace, and its introduction through the mediation of Christ into a new estate of justification and adoption.

All sections of evangelical Protestantism are substantially agreed in the definition thus given in the Symbols, though with varying emphasis upon this or that clause in the general statement. Baptism is said, in the Catechism of Luther, to work forgiveness of sins, to deliver from death and the devil, and to give everlasting salvation to all who believe, as the word and promise of God declare. The Catechism of Heidelberg teaches (69–70) that Christ hath appointed this outward washing with water and hath joined therewith this precious promise, that we are washed with his blood and Spirit from the pollution of our souls,—that we have forgiveness for sins from God through grace, and are also renewed by the Holy Ghost, and sanctified to be members of Christ. By baptism, say the Saxon Articles (III) as a bath of the regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost, God saves us and works in us such justice and purgation from our sins that he who perseveres to the end in that covenant and hope, does not perish but has eternal life. More full and accurate definitions may be found in the Helvetic Confessions, and in most of

the other formularies, Lutheran and Reformed. The Thirty-Nine Articles say, (XXVII) that baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby as by an instrument they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the church ; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed ; faith is confirmed and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God. Compared with the statements of these antecedent creeds, we may readily discern in the Symbols a marked advance in both fullness and accuracy—an advance which is explained by the rise of the immersionist issue in Britain, and by the special study which we know to have been given to the doctrine by some of the Westminster divines, and by their immediate predecessors and contemporaries.

Several of these earlier creeds show traces, like the Saxon Articles just quoted—lavacrum regenerationis—of that false view of baptism as carrying with it regeneration and the new life, which Rome received from the middle ages, and which it still retains in substance. The Tridentine Council declared in its canons that grace is conferred always and to all men through the sacramental act performed, and specially that in baptism a character, a certain spiritual and indelible sign of such grace, is imprinted in the soul, and also that such baptism, conferred by the Roman church as the mother and mistress of all churches, is necesary to salvation. In the case of the baptized infant all stains of original sin are said to be regeneratively removed through the sacrament, and in the case of adults all sin original and actual is cleansed away, so that the recipient, in the words of Moehler, becomes a member of Christ, and being interiorly quickened by the divine Spirit showeth himself a new man. We are not indeed to understand that on this view it is the sacrament by itself that regenerates, but rather that wherever the sacrament is thus observed, the grace of God works in vital conjunction with it, so as produce the spiritual result described. But it is easy to see how such a view would readily degenerate into the grossest sacramentarianism,—how the outward form would come to be the prominent feature, and the names and effects of the truth or grace—to quote again the significant warning of the Confession—would be *attributed to the sign* which simply typifies them. At the outset of the Reformation such gross and corrupting formalism had actually taken possession of the Roman church : and it was against this mode

of attributing grace to the sacraments themselves, and setting up the outward rite as if that, received and submitted to, could save the soul, that Luther and Zwingli thundered and Calvin and Knox reasoned, until northern Europe saw the destructive error and earnestly arrayed itself against it. It was against this error within the Roman communion, and as it existed in modified form in the earlier Lutheranism (Augsburg Conf. IX) and in Anglican Episcopacy also, that the Confession affirmed in the fifth section of this chapter that grace and salvation are *not so inseparably annexed unto baptism* as that no person can be regenerated or saved without baptism, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated. It has been questioned, however, whether in the sixth section, the Westminster divines did not themselves attribute more efficacy to the ordinance than their Presbyterian descendants have done, and more than the Scriptures warrant. While on one side they said that the efficacy of the sacrament is *not tied to that moment of time in which it is administered*, they yet taught that the grace promised is not only offered but *really exhibited and conferred* by the Holy Ghost in his appointed time to such as that grace belongeth unto by election—a statement not easily understood except on the hypothesis that even in the case of infants what is called baptismal grace is often, perhaps generally, received.

The position of the Assembly in respect to the mode of observing the sacrament is clearly indicated in the second section. Three things are there described as essential, the use of *water applied to the person*—water as distinguished from other liquids such as oil or milk, sometimes used in oriental communions; the administration *by a minister of the Gospel* lawfully called thereunto; and the consecration of the recipient *in the name of the Holy Trinity*. In the American Directory it is directly prescribed that there shall be no other ceremony,—such as as Rome has introduced into the observance. The omission of the name of the Trinity would in the general judgment of Protestantism fatally invalidate the observance. Unitarian baptism or baptism by other unevangelical or heretical bodies (if such a ceremony should occur) cannot be regarded as a proper compliance with the command of Christ. Roman baptism is regarded as valid, except by those who refuse to recognize the Roman communion as an integral part of the church of Christ, inasmuch as it is trinitarian. The official character of the administrator is also generally regarded by Protestants as indispensable, though the Roman church,—holding that baptism is necessary to

salvation, recognizes lay baptism as valid in certain extreme cases.

Respecting the use of water as an element, it is a striking illustration of the state of the question of mode at the time, and perhaps also of the liberality of the Assembly on matters regarded as comparatively indifferent, that all three modes of applying water to the person, known in the early Church, sprinkling and pouring and dipping or immersing, were alike recognized by that body as valid. In the third section it is stated that baptism is *rightly administered either by pouring or by sprinkling* water upon the person, and that *the dipping of the person into the water is not necessary*. In the original Directory (Chap. VIII) it is said that infants may be baptized by pouring or sprinkling water on their faces: which for the manner of doing it, is *not only lawful but sufficient and most expedient to be*. An interesting illustration of the disposition of the Assembly appears in the Life of Lightfoot (Preface to his Works), in the following record: When they came to the vote whether the Directory should run thus, The minister shall take water and *sprinkle or pour* it with his hand upon the face or forehead of the child, some were unwilling to have *dipping* excluded; so that the vote came to an equality within one, for the one side there being twenty-four and for the other twenty-five. The business was therefore recommitted and resumed the day following, when Lightfoot demanded of them who insisted upon the recognition of *dipping*, that they would state the reason of their opinion, and would give in their proofs. Hereupon it was thus worded, That pouring on of water or sprinkling in the administration of baptism is lawful and sufficient. Whereupon Lightfoot excepted against the word *lawful*, it being unfit to vote that as lawful which every one grants it to be, and moved that it might be expressed thus, *It is not only lawful but also sufficient:* and it was so done accordingly. To this settlement of the question of mode in the case of adults as well as infants, the Presbyterian churches have adhered almost without exception, and still adhere. The preference for pouring or sprinkling, the two terms being apparently very nearly synonymous, as being sufficient and *most expedient to be*, does not exclude dipping or immersion if Christian expedience should so suggest; and this latter mode is regarded by all Presbyterians as entirely valid.

It is not practicable in these confessional studies to enter into any discussion of the vexed question here presented. That there is a considerable group of texts in the New Testament which suggest immersion as a probable mode of administration in the

apostolic church, may be freely admitted. That there is another group of texts equally extensive, which point to pouring or sprinkling as the more probable mode, and still another which seem to preclude the possibility or at least the probability of immersion, is an equally palpable fact. That the germs of the sacrament found in the lustrations and baptisms of the Old Testament, representing ceremonial defilement and ceremonial purification chiefly, suggest a similar variety in the Christian ordinance is quite apparent. And in view of such biblical presentations, taken in their totality, it seems a just conclusion that our Lord intentionally left the incidental question of administration to the judgment of the church in the very diversified conditions in which, as he foresaw, it was to be placed on the earth. So long as the essential truths represented in the sacrament are spiritually held, and the sacrament is spiritually observed in cordial obedience to his command, the subordinate question of mode cannot properly be regarded as vital. Tenacious adherence to any particular mode, to the condemnation of all others, is certainly not essential in itself, neither is it in harmony with the cardinal law of spiritual brotherhood in Christ. Nor is it an unimportant fact in the case that uniformity in administration in all countries and in all the endless variety of circumstance, is in the nature of things well-nigh impossible. Neither is the witness of history even in the earliest ages, as found in the Didache and other like testimonies, at all conclusive as showing that immersion was the only, though it may have been a frequent mode of administration in apostolic or post-apostolic times. And in view of all the evidence that can be gathered from all quarters it is doubtful whether any wiser conclusion can be reached on the whole matter, than that so happily enunciated by Calvin in terms which undoubtedly suggested the declaration of the Assembly: Whether the person who is baptized be wholly immersed, or whether water be only poured or sprinkled upon him, is of no importance: churches ought to be left at liberty in this respect to act according to the difference of countries: Inst. B. IV: 15.

Some subsidiary matters of administration present themselves at this point. The seventh section of this chapter teaches that baptism *is but once to be administered* to any person; and the Directory requires that, being a churchly ordinance, it shall take place *in the presence of the congregation*, though it is not invalid if administered in *private houses*. The Directory also advises that it be not unnecessarily delayed, evidently with reference to the tendency occasionally manifest in church history, to postpone

baptism to a certain age or to the closing period of life. The Confession declares it *a great sin to contemn or neglect the ordinance*, though grace and salvation are not inseparably annexed unto it: and the Directory counsels the minister to instruct the people whenever occasion offers as to the appointment, nature use and ends of the sacrament. In the administration it is not needful that the water be three times sprinkled or poured on the person as the three names in the Trinity are pronounced, nor has the naming of the baptized person any essential relation to the ordinance. It is advised also that the biblical usage and precedent as to form be preserved in their simplicity, and that no additional features beyond exhortation and prayer be introduced. The baptizing of sanctuaries or altars or bells, or other impersonal objects as a species of benediction, is evidently contrary to scriptural teaching and to Protestant usage: other kindred practices introduced or observed by Rome, are to be rejected as unwarrantable superstitions.

3. Baptism: proper subjects: baptism of infants.

A second question which has divided and still divides Protestantism to a serious extent, but which can only be briefly adverted to here, relates to the classes of persons to whom the water of baptism may be applied. Nearly all Protestants are substantially agreed that adults should be baptized only upon personal profession of faith, and as an introductory step toward voluntary union with some Christian church. They agree in holding that the church is something more than a visible society to whose privileges baptism in infancy conveys a formal title, and whose adult membership is made up of those who have entered its communion through or in virtue of such baptism, without regard to their spiritual state before God. While differing somewhat in respect to the nature and amount of the personal experience of religion requisite to such connection, they are agreed that there should be in every case some credible profession of piety as a personal experience. They regard baptism when applied to adults as being far more than a sign of ecclesiastical place or privilege,—as signifying rather a personal *ingrafting into Christ*, with regeneration and the remission of sins through his grace and mediation. Nor do they consent that any adult should be admitted to the church in the hope that through its culture he may be led to repentance and faith according to the Gospel. They therefore refuse to baptize any adult except upon the single and simple condition of personal acceptance of Christ, and the willingness sincerely manifested to serve him faithfully and

always, as a member of his visible household of faith. During the discussions in the Assembly it was resolved (Minutes, 394) that *the duty of improving our baptism* is to be performed by us all our life long, by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and of the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed thereby, and our solemn vow made therein; and by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of and walking contrary to the grace of baptism.

The question now to be considered in brief relates to the application of the water of baptism to infants, who are incapable of any such experience as has just been described. The church of Rome baptizes all infants, as well as all consenting adults, on the ground that none but baptized infants are regenerate and saved. The Tridentine Council, following Irenaeus and Origen and other patristic authorities, affirmed in explicit terms that little children should be baptized in order to their regeneration,—that, having received baptism, they are to be counted among the faithful though they have not actual faith,—that baptism ought never to be postponed until such children are able to believe for themselves,—that being baptized in infancy they are not to be baptized again upon any avowal of such faith,—that their ratification in adult years of the baptism applied in childhood is not essential,—that they are therefore within the church even against their maturer will, and are not to be expelled from it or subjected to any penalty as members of it, except exclusion from the holy Eucharist: and the Council concluded its very positive canons by pronouncing its formal anathema on all who reject its teachings on this subject. Nor is it too much to say that the strict enforcement and steadfast use of the doctrine put forth in these canons have had much to do, from the days of that memorable Council until now, with the maintenance of the firm hold of Romanism upon the people of southern Europe, and with its success in the propagation of the faith in other lands. To baptise an infant and thus give it an enduring place within the church, to educate it wholly under the nurture of the church, to habituate it to the conviction that the church holds it by an indissoluble bond, and during its maturer years to enforce upon it the claim of membership as an investiture which cannot be thrown off and which it is death to the soul to question, is a process that can result only in establishing a domination which the individual feels utterly unable to oppose, and which gives the church an irresistible control over his belief and his life.

It is a familiar fact that the earlier Reformers, notwithstanding their opposition to Rome, remained largely under the influence of this illusive conception. The Apologia declares it most certain that the promise of salvation belongs even to infants, and that they ought therefore to be baptised inasmuch as salvation is offered in or with baptism. Similar expressions appear in the Smalcald Articles, and in the Helvetic Confessions. Luther in his Larger Catechism tersely says that the virtue, work, use, fruit, end of baptism is to save, and affirms that infants are saved in baptism—but on the singular hypothesis that they do in some way or sense personally believe. They were led into this position partly by the state church theory which made all persons, adult or infant, members of some geographic ecclesiastical organization; partly by the lingering influence, as these quotations show, of the notion of baptismal regeneration: and partly, we may hope, through their recognition of the Old Testament doctrine of the unity of the pious household. But it is evident also, that almost from the beginning many of them realized that the theory of regenerative baptism and of geographic church membership would only fill their churches with multitudes who had never believed in Christ or been justified through his mediation, unless some spiritual expedients or agencies should be introduced as correctives. Hence arose the series of Catechisms, beginning with those of Luther, which were even more potent than the authorized creeds in educating the people in spiritual and practical religion.

It is another interesting fact that as early as 1524 Luther, with this great need in mind, set about the establishment of Christian schools in the cities of Germany, declaring in his own strong language that it is a grave and serious thing, affecting the interests of the kingdom of Christ and of all the world, that we apply ourselves to the instruction of the young. Two years later, in a letter to the Elector of Saxony, he broached the broad principle on which all modern systems of popular education are based, that inasmuch as such instruction is necessary to the well-being of the state, it should be supplied by those wielding authority over the state; and on that basis principally the common school, imparting positive religion as well as ordinary knowledge, was established during that century not only in Germany but in Switzerland and Holland and elsewhere in northern Europe, including the British Isles. In 1558, John Knox, writing from Geneva, declared it most expedient for the preservation of religion, that schools be immediately erected in all cities and chief towns . . . that of the youth godly instructed in them a seed may be preserved

and continued for the profit of the church in all ages. Protestantism has always needed the Christian school as well as the Christian home as an adjunct to the church in diffusing and perpetuating the true faith: without their helpful ministrations and influence infant baptism has always degenerated into a superstitious form, and infant church connection has always been superficial and unfruitful.

Guarded against such perversions, the doctrine of child membership,—a membership established at birth and certified in the rite of baptism—is, as we have already had occasion to see, a tenet clearly sustained by Scripture, and palpably confirmed in the experience of Christendom. But we must go back of such experimental evidence to the Old Testament teachings respecting the spiritual as well as the natural unity of the pious family, respecting the divine covenant with the heads of such holy households, respecting the religious significance of circumcision regarded as an outward sign and seal of said covenant, respecting the transmission of piety through the sanctified home from generation to generation, respecting the relation of the home to the church and the ordained perpetuity of the church through the appointed ordinances of grace,—we must turn back to these primal teachings to find the initial warrant for the application of the water of baptism to the children of believing parents. We must turn also to the example of our Lord in blessing little children and proclaiming them heirs of heaven,—to his tender instruction concerning them, even as lambs in his earthly flock,—to the teaching of the apostles respecting the godly family, and especially the Pauline instruction as to the federal holiness of the offspring of pious parentage, and the illustrations of household as well as individual baptism recorded in the New Testament. We must also recognize the essential oneness of the Church in all dispensations, the practical identity between the faith of Abraham and Christian faith, the transmission of other ordinances such as the paschal supper, and the close relation between circumcision as a type under the old and infant baptism as a type under the new economy of grace. It is important also to note in close conjunction the recorded usage of the early church, if not in all instances still in many, and the historic growth of such usage, avowedly on biblical rather than traditional authority, until it came to be the general practice of the church in both its western and its oriental divisions. To all this may be added the manifest values of this sacramental observance to the Christian parent as a guide and stimulant to the training of his children for

Christ ;—to the child thus consecrated even from infancy to the divine service and nurtured from the outset into holy manhood or womanhood ; and to the church as an encouragement to supply so far as possible all needful help in such nurture, and as an assurance that, in the instructive words of Knox, a holy seed shall be preserved and continued through all the ages.

If Romanism can justify itself in the baptizing of infants and incorporating them by that sign within its ecclesiastical fold, a thousand times more may evangelical Protestantism, counting its youth even from their birth as members in its holy family, and devoting itself to their training for complete membership in after life, set this seal upon them and by that act openly acknowledge its relationship to them, and its purpose and faith with respect to their spiritual relationship to Christ. That on the various grounds here noted there has grown up in the Protestant communions as well as in the Greek and Roman churches, a general verdict in favor of this ordinance cannot be questioned : that there is a growing appreciation of its values, especially in those communions where it has been most thoroughly tested, is a manifest fact. Nor is evidence of its decline in favor anywhere apparent. Parental faith and the parental covenant, enfolding the infant, are as real now as in the age of Abraham; should these disappear, one of the peculiar glories of the Christian religion would be lost. And certainly it is a fact of great significance and comfort, that those sections of Protestantism which refuse to regard infant baptism as an ordinance warranted by Scripture and historic experience, do still recognize the great underlying truths in the case, and do probably as earnestly as others endeavor to train up their youth in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The spiritual quality of the sacrament, and also of the covenant into which the parents enter in connection with it, cannot be too strongly emphasized. That covenant puts the parents under obligations as tender and sacred as can ever rest on any human being. The American Directory (Ch. VIII) declares that they ought to teach the child to read the Word of God and instruct it in the principles of our holy religion, to pray with and for it, to set it an example of piety and godliness, and by all the means of divine appointment to train it up for Christ and for heaven. In the presence of such obligations all duties relating to the temporal welfare of children, such as provision for food and clothing or for their education and their comfort and happiness in maturer life—though in themselves primary and indispensable—grow relatively secondary and unimportant. To feed and robe

and shelter and instruct and ripen the child for Christian usefulness and for heaven, must after all be the supreme obligation. The original Directory contains a form of prayer to be offered in connection with the ordinance, which might well be treasured in the memory of all pious parents, and be offered up from day to day so long as their children remain within the sanctuary of the home.

4. The Lord's Supper: its design and uses. Roman and Protestant doctrine: Participants: mode of administration.

The second Christian sacrament, the sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, is set before us exhaustively in one of the most extended chapters (XXIX) in the Confession, and with corresponding elaborateness in the Larger Catechism, and in both the original and the American Directory for Worship. Cunningham justly remarks (Hist. Theol.) that the papal doctrine concerning this sacrament forms the very heart and marrow of the papal system of belief; and adds that the Roman church has embodied in its teaching and practice on this subject its principal provisions for crushing the exercise of all mental independence and freedom of thought, and for subjecting the understandings, consciences and purses of men to the control of the priesthood. It is not surprising, therefore, that every prominent creed of the Reformation which aims at a comprehensive statement of Christian doctrine, should contain extensive articles or chapters on this subject. Nor is it surprising that, although all were agreed in condemning the papal teaching as unscriptural and pernicious, the Reformers should have failed at various points to agree among themselves as to certain purposes and features of the sacrament,—such failure developing, as we know in some instances, into suspicion and open antagonism. It must be confessed that the Protestant belief was far from being a unit during the sixteenth century, and that later Protestanism even down to our own day has not been able to attain such unity as to specific elements in the doctrine, though even more firm than the earlier in condemnation of the Roman view.

There are indeed some elements of the doctrine in which Romanism and Protestantism are substantially agreed. Both regard the sacrament as imposed authoritatively by Christ, and as appointed for his Church and for the instruction and nutriment of his disciples to the end of the world. Both regard the sacrament as a continuation under the Gospel of that paschal supper through which the devout people of Israel celebrated their deliverance from

Egyptian bondage. Both condemn the Socinian affirmation that the sacrament was designed as a temporary expedient, suited to the needs of the apostolic church, but intended to pass away with time: and the kindred notion that it is a mere ceremony of thanksgiving and profession, or a mode of good fellowship, which may be observed or omitted according to taste or convenience. Both regard the observance as something more than a spiritual or inward commemoration of Christ and his sacrifice,—as rather a formal ordinance of the church, to be observed visibly as our Lord commanded, and with the use of the elements which he selected.

But beyond these points there is wide and indeed irreconcileable disagreement. Romanism affirms that these two elements, bread and wine, are so transubstantiated or transformed by what is in the nature of a miracle that, without changing their outward appearance, they do actually become the veritable body and blood of the crucified Redeemer. According to the Council of Trent this ordinance, in virtue of such transubstantiation, becomes something more than a simple sacrament; it is a visible sacrifice also, whereby the original sacrifice on the cross is not only typified but in a sense repeated, and its salutary virtue directly applied to the remission of sins. Our Lord, in other words, is immolated again under visible signs by the church through the priestly ministration, and the mass thus becomes a propitiation through which the grace and gift of penitence are granted, and heinous sins and crimes are forgiven, if the sacrament be received, in this sense of it, with a sincere heart and with godly reverence. Like baptism it carries grace in itself, and is to be administered as an *opus operatum*,—the participant actually receiving Christ corporeally as well as spiritually, though in an incomprehensible manner. It is held further, that this sacrifice may be offered in the interest of the dead as truly as of the living, both for the honoring of departed saints already in heaven, and for the benefit of those who, though departed in Christ, are not as yet fully purified. And the mass may be observed in certain cases by the priesthood only, acting therein for the whole church, and in all cases the wine duly mixed with water must be taken by none but the priest, since the whole Christ is received under either species alone. Nor is the sacrament ever to be celebrated in the vulgar tongue, or in any other than a low tone, since the priest is speaking therein to God only. It is also claimed that the church may rightly employ additional ceremonies at her discretion, such as mystic benedictions, lights, incense, vestments, if derived from apostolical discipline and tradition, whereby—it is said—the

majesty of so great a sacrifice may be commended, and the minds of the faithful may be excited by such visible signs of religion and piety to the contemplation of those most sublime things which are hidden in this sacrifice.

The Reformers were cordially agreed in rejecting the dogma of miraculous transubstantiation, and of an actual repetition in the sacrament, in any form whatever, of the original oblation of Christ on the cross. They were agreed in rejecting the fiction that there is grace hidden in the elements when thus transformed, which is communicated corporeally to the participant, as if the elements had efficacy in themselves; or that the sacrament can be beneficial to any one otherwise than through the exercise of faith in and personal appropriation of the crucified Redeemer, whose dying for us men and for our salvation the ordinance was designed to typify. They were agreed that the sacrament could not be of value to the dead whether for honor or for purgation, and that it is valuable to the living, not because the church provides it or the priesthood administers it, but only so far as it represents a spiritual union established between the believing recipient and Christ. They were agreed also in rejecting the usage of private mass, the exclusion of the laity from sharing in the wine, the administration in language unknown to the people, and the introduction of ceremonials superadded upon the original ordinance as instituted by our Lord. In a word, they were agreed in repudiating the notion of the sacrament as a ritual and a sacrifice, and held it rather as a spiritual ordinance full of grace and blessing if its divine intent was observed, and Christ himself was present to hallow the observance. In the language of the Second Helvetic Conf.: As the sun in heaven is efficaciously present with us, so much more is Christ, the sun of righteousness, with us not indeed corporeally, but spiritually, by his enlivening and vivifying operation, even as he in the Last Supper explained that he would himself be present with his people.

In the more specific interpretation of this ordinance, three varieties of opinion existed among the primitive Protestants. At one extreme stood Zwinglianism, maintaining the widest contrast with the papal dogma at every point, and affirming that the holy supper is historical and commemorative only—a picturesque ceremonial designed to bring to mind the tragic scene on Calvary, and so to impress us more vividly with the reality and preciousness of the atoning sacrifice there once for all offered in behalf of sin. At the other extreme stood Lutheranism, repudiating the error of transubstantiation, yet affirming that in some transcendental way

Christ is really present with and in the elements employed, so that the sacrament becomes, not merely a commemoration of the crucifixion as a past event, but also an actual participation of the Savior as present in some sense corporeally,—the real presence and oral communication of the body and blood of Christ becoming, in the language of another (Sprecher, Evang. Luth. Theol.), a most gracious pledge of the forgiveness of sins: see Krauth, Conservative Reformation.

Between these extremes stood the profound doctrine of Calvin, which has been incorporated in substance in all of the Reformed Confessions, and which has become the generally accepted doctrine of Protestant communions, outside of the circles of sacramentarian Lutheranism. Calvin defines a sacrament briefly (Inst. B. IV: 14) after the manner of Augustine, as a testimony of the grace of God toward us, confirmed by an outward sign as a ring or pledge, with a reciprocal attestation of our faith in Christ; but more broadly, as an outward sign by which the Lord seals in our consciences the promises of his good will towards us, to support the weakness of our faith, while we on our part testify our piety towards him in his presence and that of angels as well as before men. He justifies his general definition by a careful process of reasoning both from Scripture and from the nature of the Christian sacraments: and then applies it specifically to the sacrament of the supper, which he describes as a spiritual banquet in which Christ testifies himself to be the bread of life, to feed our souls for a true and blessed immortality. It is, he says elsewhere, a token and pledge of our secret union through faith with him who is the fountain and origin of all spiritual life, by whose flesh and blood our souls are fed, just as our corporeal life is preserved and sustained by bread and wine. Against the dogma of transubstantiation, and all the errors and mischiefs that have grown out of it, Calvin utters his most earnest protestations: between Zwinglianism and Lutheranism he stands in the attitude of mediation, recognizing what is good in the teaching of each, but criticising their respective deficiencies, especially the Lutheran conception of the corporeal ubiquity of Christ on earth, and adding what he regards, and what later Protestantism generally has come to regard with him, as essential to the completeness and spiritual value of the sacrament.

The elaborate chapter in the Confession presents in detail and with great discrimination the Reformed or Calvinistic view. In the first section, it affirms the appointment of this holy ordinance by Christ himself as an institution of his church, to be observed

until the end of the world, and points out the five uses of the ordinance: first, as commemorative,—a perpetual remembrance and acknowledgment of the atoning sacrifice itself; second, as a guarantee to each true believer of all the benefits accruing from that sacrifice; third, as furnishing present nutrition and strengthening the worthy recipient in godly living; fourth, as consecratory, or in the specific sense of the term, sacramental—a solemn covenant or pledge on the part of the receiver to be faithful to all Christian duty; and fifth, as a sign of union and communion among the participants, in the fellowship of the Christian church—as members together in the mystical body of Christ: L. C. 168. Viewed more broadly, the sacrament may fitly be described as at once a sermon setting forth in picturesque form the central doctrines of grace; a creed professed and confessed before the world; a law prescribing for the believer his most vital duties; a holy hymn of praise and gratitude to Christ; a sacred oath of allegiance placing the soul under the most impressive obligations to the Redeemer; a willing covenant whereby he is conjoined for time and for eternity with those who are associated with him within the household of faith.

The second section condemns the papal tenet that the sacrament is in any sense a sacrifice or an oblation offered to God in order to secure the remission of sins, whether for the living or for the dead; and declares that *the popish sacrifice of the mass* (Revised form: the Roman Catholic doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass) is *most injurious to the one and only sacrifice of Christ.* In the third section the requisite elements are named, the form of observance is prescribed, following closely the original institution; the giving of the wine as well as the bread to the laity is required; and in the next section private masses by the priesthood, the worshiping of the elements, as if Christ were present in them, the elevation or carrying about of the host, and other papal observances, are strenuously condemned as *contrary to the nature of the sacrament and to the institution of Christ.* John Knox represented the general sentiment of Protestantism in the declaration (Lorimer, Life of Knox) that the plain rule of Scripture is to be observed in the administration of both sacraments, without addition or diminution, and that all attempts to impose additional ceremonies or to introduce any additional meanings or significations is a heinous sin. The fifth and sixth sections describe the relation of the elements as outward signs or emblems to the spiritual truths typified by them; affirm that they are the body and blood of Christ only *in a sacramental sense*, while in substance and nature they still remain *truly*

and only bread and wine, as they were before their consecration; condemn the dogma of transubstantiation as repugnant not to Scripture alone but *even to common sense and reason;* and declare that this dogma not only overthroweth the nature of the sacrament, but is the cause of manifold superstitions and even of gross idolatries.

In the seventh and eighth sections the recipients worthy and unworthy are described, and the proper limits are put upon the observance as a religious act. As in baptism so here, the qualification for participation is a gracious state already secured—indicated by an open membership in some branch of the visible church. Every such worthy receiver, partaking of the visible elements, is said to feed by faith, *not carnally or corporally but spiritually*, upon Christ crucified and all benefits of his death: Christ being present as really to the faith of believers in and with the ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses. In the language of the Shorter Catechism (96), they are made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, *to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.* Proper preparation for the sacrament is particularly described in the Larger Catechism (171) in language which may well be studied with solemn care by every one who desires to participate worthily in the observance. Wise counsel is also given (172) to those who anxiously doubt as to their personal interest in Christ, and both warning and encouragement are offered according to their individual condition and need. The special thoughts and feelings which should be experienced by the participants during the administration are mentioned—holy reverence and attention, affectionate meditation on the crucified Savior, sincere sorrow for all sins and departures from duty, thanksgiving for grace and a renewed consecration to the divine service. So also the duties consequent upon the communion are set forth with like particularity, the proper utilizing of the privilege in such ways as to increase growth in grace and holiness, and the renewed purpose to render effective service to Christ and his cause. On the other hand, all ignorant and ungodly persons are said to be unworthy to sit at the table of Christ so long as they remain such, and must not be admitted thereunto, since they by such outward participation only eat and drink not to any spiritual benefit but to their own damnation.

To these catechetical instructions must be added the further counsels and teachings contained in the two Directories for Worship. The original Directory advises that the communion shall be observed frequently,—that sufficient notice be given and due

preparation of heart be made,—that the table be so placed that the communicants may sit at or about it,—that the bread be in comely and convenient vessels and the wine in large cups: also that an exhortation be given beforehand to worthy communicants, and a solemn warning to the ignorant, scandalous, profane, and them that are living in any sin or offence against their knowledge and conscience: also that the record of the first institution be read, and the same order be observed throughout, with prayer and thanksgiving, and the blessing of the bread and the wine. Outlines of exhortation, warning, petition and thanksgiving suitable to the service are added for the guidance of the minister in the administration, and a collection for the poor at the close of the service is ordered. The American Directory makes no additional suggestion of moment, except that the communion service may fitly be preceded or followed by special services, as the needs of the people may seem to require. Subordinate questions, such as the number partaking, the posture of the communicants, the persons distributing, the quality of the bread or the wine, are wisely left to the discretion of the individual church or its official representatives.

The Larger Catechism contains two extended answers (176–177) presenting successively the points of agreement and the points of difference between the two Christian sacraments. They are said to agree in the fact that the author of both is God,—that both on their spiritual side represent Christ and his benefits,—that both are seals of the same gracious covenant,—that both are to be dispensed by ministers of the Gospel and none other,—and that both are to be continued and maintained in the church until the second coming of the Lord. They differ in the fact that baptism is to be administered but once, while the supper is to be administered often,—that baptism is observed with water, and the supper with bread and wine,—that the water of baptism is designed to be a sign and seal of our ingrafting into Christ, while the bread and wine represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul and as an assurance of continuance and growth in him,—and that baptism may be administered to infants, but the supper only to those who are of years and ability to examine themselves. The Council of Trent gave as a reason for the exclusion of children from the eucharist that, inasmuch as they have not attained to the use of reason, they are not obligated to participate; and further that, forasmuch as they have been regenerated by the laver of baptism and are thus incorporated with Christ already. they cannot during that age lose the grace which

they have already acquired of being the sons of God. The American Directory simply follows the Protestant usage in counseling that the duty and the privilege of such participation shall be urged upon the young as soon as they are able to discern the true meaning of the observance and exercise personal faith in the dying Savior whom the observance sets before them,—the officers of the particular church being judges of their spiritual qualification.

It should be noted finally that in the language of the Larger Catechism (164), Christ under the New Testament hath instituted in his church *only two sacraments*. This statement rules out not only the five minor sacraments of Rome, but also certain other usages more or less current in the primitive church, and possessing some measure of religious value, such as the agape or love-feast, the imposition of hands, anointing with oil, the washing of feet, the kiss of peace or of charity, the casting of lots. Such observances, though more or less recognizable in the New Testament, obviously do not carry the proper marks of a sacrament, nor are they enjoined upon the church as universal or perpetual, though some of them were at the outset regarded as appropriate and valuable appendages to the developing Christianity. Church history shows plainly that these observances not only originated in literalistic interpretations of Scripture and were generally associated with crass conceptions of Christianity, but have tended wherever observed to impair the authoritativeness and the spiritual values of the two unquestioned sacraments of our holy faith.

5. The Christian Ordinances: The Sabbath. The Sanctuary.

In addition to the two Christian sacraments just considered, a series of adjunctive *Ordinances*—positive institutes or appointments resting on divine authority, and sustaining special relations both to individual piety and to the life and growth of the church—present themselves at this point for careful consideration. The term, ordinance, is sometimes used more specifically as the synonym of sacrament merely, and sometimes so broadly as to include all the parts or elements of Christian worship. In the Larger Catechism (154) it is said that the outward and ordinary means by which Christ communicates to his church the benefits of his mediation, are *all his ordinances*—especially the word, sacraments and prayer. Similar use of the term appears in two sections of the confessional chapter (VII) on the Covenants. What is now contemplated is that group of fixed institutes or prescripts of divine origin and authority, which,

although not so directly enforced as the sacraments were by any positive command of Christ, are still closely related to the sacraments as conditions of Christian culture and as tributary aids in the life of the organized church. Even in the Hebraic dispensation there were such adjunctive institutes, divinely ordained as helps in religious living for both the individual and the nation. The altar, the tabernacle and the temple, the holy feasts and sabbaths, the ordained modes of worship, the prescribed ceremonies and the priestly office, taken together, constituted a sacred cultus through whose gracious disciplines the Hebrews were led into larger and richer experience of religion than they could otherwise have gained. While these, so far as they were typical merely, have ceased to be obligatory under the Gospel, yet Christianity as well as Hebraism stands in need of similar tributary appointments, as helps alike to the best culture and to the most effective labors of those who love and serve Christ. The ordinances divinely provided in the present dispensation to meet this obvious need are four in number; the Sabbath a sacred time, the Sanctuary a sacred place, the Means of Grace constituting a sacred cultus, and the Ministry as a sacred order and form of service in the interest of believers and of the church.

The Sabbath as a sacred time, instituted at the creation, invested with new significance at Sinai, and lifted into its supreme place under the Gospel as commemorative of the resurrection of Christ and of salvation through his messiahship, has already been sufficiently considered in general, in the study of the Ten Commandments. We may now simply note that it is to be cherished and observed by the church through all ages as a holy ordinance, appointed by God in order that spiritual religion might thus have set seasons and opportunities for its largest development. Both for private instruction and devotion, and for public convocation and worship, the Sabbath as an institute, consecrated by divine sanction, seems hardly less essential than are the two Christian sacraments,—a blessed day of grace which the church of Christ can never spare.

The Sanctuary as a sacred place stands by the side of the Christian Sabbath as a second institute, almost equally essential alike to the believer and to the church. Both in Scripture and in fact religion presents itself to our view first of all as an inward experience, and the closet or its equivalent is the first temple. Enoch walking alone with God, Isaac worshiping at eventide, Daniel praying in his chamber, are types of an experience, hidden and apart from the world, which is in fact universal among saints.

But from the beginning, community of faith when realized found its natural expression in community of worship, first around the crude altars which were the primitive centers of religious assembling, afterwards in the Mosaic tabernacle, and then in the temple and the local synagogue. The conception of a fixed place in which God should especially dwell and be specially adored, was thus inwrought from the beginning in the convictions of the chosen people; and in the later eras of their national life, the splendid temple of Solomon became the material embodiment of such convictions—a suitable place for the residence of the national church.

That profound religious instinct which thus expressed itself in Hebraism, rises to its culmination in Christianity. Though religion under the Gospel as under the law is primarily a personal matter—an experience of the closet, it is also an associative experience, and the sanctuary like the church is one of its practical and universal needs. The followers of Christ indeed worshiped privately at first, and in whatever places of convocation might be found available: but the Christian sanctuary soon began to appear by the side of the Jewish synagogue and the pagan temple, wherever the developing church could provide itself with such a spiritual home. And wherever in later ages Christianity in whatever variety has gone, such consecrated homes have invariably sprung up as indispensable adjuncts. It is not needful here to discuss the many specific uses which the Christian sanctuary subserves. The glad strains of the psalmist, as he sings of the gates of Zion, loved of Jehovah, are representative of the happy emotions with which every true saint contemplates the house of God, as the holy place where he has received his most precious instruction touching divine things, where his soul has been lifted up into its loftiest spiritual experiences, and where his hope of dwelling finally in the house of the Lord forever has reached its firmest assurance. The sanctuary also brings such saints together as one happy family, and becomes the scene of their sweetest communion and of their most productive activities. It also stands forth before the eyes of all men as an enduring invitation to come in and partake of the feast of grace, and a silent but most effective witness to the reality and power and permanence of the Christian faith. Were there no such consecrated places, in which the company of the faithful might meet for mutual culture, for social worship, for organized endeavor in the interest of religion, it is almost certain that religion itself, deprived of its legitimate home and support, would languish and decline from the earth.

It follows as an imperative obligation that every household of faith should, wherever possible, provide itself with such a spiritual home, and should make whatever sacrifices and undergo whatever labors may be requisite to gain so great a privilege. It seems at first sight singular that this obligation should have had almost no recognition in the creeds of the Reformation. This omission is explained in part by the supreme absorption of the Reformers in the more pressing matters relating to the church itself, its faith and constitution and order. It is also to be remembered that the places of worship already erected under the papacy became available for use, and were sufficient, wherever Protestantism established itself geographically. The cathedrals of Germany, Switzerland, Holland, in which the Roman mass had been celebrated for centuries, became the homes of Protestant churches, and resounded with the sermons and the hymns and prayers of of those who had accepted the new faith. Westminster Abbey, as we know, was first a Papal, then an Episcopal, and for a little time a Presbyterian and also an Independent sanctuary. But in general the obligation just named is as universal as evangelical Christianity. The example of the Jewish nation, in its readiness to contribute to the erection of the tabernacle and the temple, and in its generous maintenance of the sacrificial and the tithing system divinely imposed upon it, becomes an impressive enforcement of this duty. Similar incentive might be drawn from the vast expenditure for temples, sacrifices, priestly service, among the devotees of the great natural religions. But a thousand fold more imperative is the obligation of every Christian church to provide itself with an appropriate sanctuary, as a home for the the disciple, a school for the young, a pulpit for the public proclamation of the truth, a fountain of gracious life and influence that may refresh and fertilize the world.

6. The Christian Ordinances: Means of Grace, distinctively.

The phrase, *Means of Grace*, is frequently employed to describe in general all those instrumentalities which God is pleased to use for the spiritual edification of his people, and also those special institutes or appointments which he has ordained to be the channels of grace,—what are styled in the Larger Catechism (161), *the means of salvation*. These means are described in the Symbols as three in number; the Word, the sacraments and prayer. In the two Catechisms these three are classed together as the *outward and ordinary means* whereby Christ communicates the benefits of his redemption. The Augsburg Conf. (V) says that it is by the word and sacraments as instruments,

that the Holy Spirit worketh faith when and where it pleaseth God in those that hear the Gospel: so the Heidelberg Catechism deciares that the Holy Ghost teaches us in the Gospel and by the holy sacraments. But later formularies add prayer, as in the Confession (VII), and also fasting and devout meditation and other religious exercises, and in some cases the providences of God both favorable and adverse, as tributary helps in gracious experience. In a more specific sense, the means of grace are simply the various parts or branches of private, but especially of public worship—the ordained cultus wherein God is adored and his religion advanced within the sanctuary; what are described in the Amer. Form of Gov. distinctively as *the ordinances*.

In their most elementary type, as during the patriarchal period, these ordinances consisted simply of sacrifice and adoration, in connection especially with the Sabbath,—the adoration doubtless assuming the form of praise and prayer. At least we find no clear traces during this period, extending as far as the Exodus, of any other variety of worship. After that event, the reading of the Sinaitic law was added, in conjunction with a more extended system of sacrifices; and still later came in the exposition of the law as a regular feature in the sabbatic service. As the sacred books increased in number, especially during the royal and prophetic eras, the reading of history and prophecy as well as law was introduced. Vocal praise also grew into prominence, particularly in the age of David and his successors. The simpler ritual of the tabernacle gave way by degrees to the gorgeous ceremonial of the temple, with its robed priests and its costlier offerings. The three great annual feasts, and the crowning festival of the sabbatic year, gave occasion for still further elaboration of the national worship. Yet the essential elements of that worship, sacrifice and offering, prayer and praise, the reading and exposition of the law and of the other inspired literature, remained without important change, and were observed alike in the second temple and in the local synagogue down to the Christian era—as indeed they still survive essentially wherever the Hebrew race come together for purposes of devotion.

Under the Gospel this divinely prescribed cultus survived in substance, though with some important modifications on one side and some essential additions on the other. The one great sacrifice having been offered once for all, the altar and the formal sacrifice were no longer needful, yet the presentation of suitable offerings as expressions of gratitude to Christ and of loyalty to his cause, are as incumbent on the Christian, as the burning of

consecrated animals was on the Hebrew. The great high priest having ascended into the heavens, there to intercede for his church, the priestly orders were all abolished as no longer needful; yet the Christian minister is also an intercessor for the sins of the people, and every Christian is in a profound and blessed sense a priest unto God. The Sinaitic law has not lost its claim to devout recognition in public service, nor are the Jewish history and prophecy to be set aside as no longer important; yet the story of Christ and his teaching, and the records and communications of his disciples, constitute a still more vital message to be reverently read in the sanctuary through all the ages. Prayer and praise remain, but the basis and scope of prayer and both the substance and the tone of praise have assumed more spiritual quality and far loftier significance. Christian worship in all its varieties thus sprang directly out of the old Hebrew cultus as God had prescribed it, just as the Christian Church sprang from the Church Hebraic, yet both the Church of Christ and its worship assumed from the first a much broadened form, a higher character, a more spiritual meaning. Romanism has indeed made the fearful mistake of following too closely the Hebraic antetype, and has consequently ceremonialized and corrupted disastrously the true Christian cultus. It is the glory of evangelical Protestantism that, while it has shaken off the Jewish husk, it has faithfully preserved all that was vital in that primitive worship, and has glorified it all through the new significance and power of the Christian faith.

According to the original Form of Government, drafted by the Assembly, the means of grace or ordinances consisted of prayer, thanksgiving, singing of psalms, the Scriptures read and expounded and applied, catechising, the sacraments administered, collections received for the poor, and dismissing the people with the apostolic benediction. The American Form (VII) varies the language in several places, adds public fasting and the exercise of discipline, provides for contributions for other pious purposes, but makes no really important change. The American Directory proceeds on this basis to give practical instruction as to each of these parts or departments of public worship, but also introduces an important series of chapters designed to instruct the minister in the discharge of certain other functions officially devolving upon him. What thus appears in Presbyterian usage, however, is by no means peculiar to the Presbyterian churches: neither Lutheranism nor Anglicanism or Methodism provides any essentially different religious cultus. There are some wide variations

among Protestants with respect to the method and the proportion and style of these various elements of worship; yet the Protestant cultus is as truly one in essence as is the formal ritual of Rome. Adoration in the form of prayer and praise, the reading and exposition of holy Scripture, the administration of the sacraments, with the adjunctive acts just named, are universally its distinctive characteristics.

7. The Christian Ordinances: The Ministry as an office.

What has been said already respecting the Christian minister as an official servant within the church,—his call and appointment, his sphere and functions, and his delegated authority as an ordained teacher and ruler in the household of faith, need not be repeated here. That the Ministry, no less truly than the Sabbath or the Sanctuary or the Means of Grace just described, is an ordinance of God, instituted in the interest of religion and of the church, is a proposition justified alike by Scripture and by wide and prolonged experience. The apostolic church had beyond question such a ministry, set apart by divine warrant and officially recognized and vested with due authority in the church. In the centuries succeeding we are obliged to recognize, first, the undue multiplication of such official teachers and rulers, and later on, the rise of that hierarchal sacerdotalism of which the papacy became finally the disastrous consummation. The divine ordinance was gradually subverted and overruled through the pride and ambition and selfishness of man, and the primitive ministry which Christ appointed, slowly relapsed into a priesthood scarcely worthier than that of Judaism. But it is greatly to the credit of the primitive Protestantism that, in the presence of the dominating and persecuting hierarchy of Rome, it did not swing over to the opposite extreme, and cast the ministerial office aside as being no essential part or element of the Christian church. There were iconoclasts like Carlstadt and his disciples, who were inclined at least to undervalue, if not to cast off, not only the ministry as an order, but also the sacraments and almost every other constituent of the visible church. But it was a mark of the sound conservatism of Luther, or rather of his profound Christian wisdom, that he desired no changes within the church which did not result spontaneously from clear insight into the true principles and demands of Scripture. Zwingli also affirmed the full legitimacy of the New Testament ministry, but drew sharp lines between that holy office, and the Roman priesthood. Calvin followed both, not only in a deeper detestation of the papacy in all its gradations, but in an

elaborate and irresistible argument in favor of a divinely warranted and adequately endowed ministry; and it was from him chiefly that subsequent Protestantism derived the solid doctrine to which in most of its branches it has ever since in substance adhered.

It is true that during the long period of discussion, and of division also, which intervened between the age of Calvin and that of the Westminster Assembly, the Protestant communions both on the Continent and in Great Britain, found themselves more and more inclined to disagree respecting the nature of ordination and the number and classifying and qualification of those who should fill the ministry. On the one side in England arose a considerable body who, if they did not fully accept the doctrine of Carlstadt, were inclined with him to regard the minister as little more than a private member, appointed not so much to an indelible office with corresponding prerogatives as to a simple function more or less permanent—more or less authoritative:—the essence of the call to such service being the election by the particular church, his acceptance of such election, and his separation to that service by the official representatives of that church: Savoy Decl. *in loc.* On the other side arose the prelatic dogma of three orders in the ministry, whose members were lifted quite out of the ranks of the laity and set apart to the task of exercising certain holy functions within the church, and to whom there was transmitted through the episcopate a special grace, a spiritual and ineffaceable character, supernaturally endowing its recipients for their sacred office. Between these two extremes the divines of Westminster, after long debate especially with the eminent and learned representatives of Independency in the Assembly, took a mediate position; rejecting on one side with marked emphasis the dogma of three orders and of the need of episcopal ordination, with its claim of transmitted grace; on the other side affirming the indelibility of the ministerial office, the special gifts received by those divinely chosen to fill it, the authority and dignity vested consequently in them, and the jurisdiction granted to them within the church. Gathering their doctrine from various references in the Confession and Catechisms, and especially from the Form of Gov. where the qualifications of the office and the manner of receiving it are described in detail, we have no difficulty in discovering how poised and considerate, how strong and how thoroughly biblical their position was. The fact that their doctrine has stood without change for more than two centuries among the numerous Presbyterian communions now

planted throughout the world, may be regarded as presumptive proof of its scripturalness and its practical worth.

Recognizing the ministerial office as being thus, as truly as the Sabbath or the Sanctuary or the Means of Grace, an ordinance of divine appointment for the benefit of the church, we may now easily discern its peculiar relation to these associated ordinances or institutes of Christianity. The Sabbath and the Sanctuary clearly presuppose such a ministry as definitely as they presuppose a congregation assembled for worship on the holy day. The Means of Grace in like manner require such a ministry for their proper utilization : it is not easy to see how they could be made effectual or valuable otherwise. The conception of such a divinely appointed series of gracious disciplines certainly carries with it the conception of an ordained leadership whereby the church may be aided in these forms of social devotion. It is quite obvious that the divine appointment of Aaron and his sons, and of the Levitical order for service in the Hebrew church, rested on such a necessity. Much more apparent is that need in the church of the New Testament, with its more extended system of worship, and its broadened experience of divine things. Without such ordained helps Judaism would inevitably have fallen into decadence: the Sabbath and Sanctuary, and the Mosaic ceremonials, would have lost their hold on the popular mind and conscience. Still more certain is it that the Christian ministry has an essential place as an instrumental and tributary ordinance, indispensable to the proper carrying into effect of these kindred institutes. And the argument in its favor is greatly enhanced, if we take into account also the helpful relation of a duly authorized ministry to the right administration of the two holy sacraments which are associated with these institutes as constituent features of the Church of Christ. The ministerial office is to be regarded as in all these ways essential, if not to the existence of the church, at least to the proper maintenance both of its interior life, and of its external activities as a divine agency and representative in the world.

This elevated conception of the ministry explains the marked emphasis laid by the Assembly on the possession of large endowments and of special equipment for the holy office. There are very broad differences between the Romanist and the Protestant opinion as to the kind and amount of mental culture requisite in the minister. These differences made themselves apparent even in the earlier decades of the Reformation. But Calvin and Knox were still more strenuous than Luther and Zwingli had been. in insisting on high qualifications, intellectual

as well as moral, to be possessed by those who should proclaim the new doctrines or guide the young churches in their worship and their organized activities. Romanism, depending largely on the spectacular element in religion, exalting the church as the channel of salvation, glorifying the sacraments as the only or chief means of grace, and enrobing the priesthood with crimson and gilded authorities, might dispense in large measure with both learning and character. But no variety of Protestantism could hope to prosper by any such process. Even in its crudest forms the primitive Protestantism realized its need of a body of leaders, such as Luther and Calvin and their learned associates and successors, who were competent to instruct, to educate and elevate intellectually, the people and churches committed to their ecclesiastical care. A minister, said the Helvetic Conf. representing closely the view of Calvin, and indeed of the Reformers generally, should not only be lawfully called and chosen by the church, but should excel in sacred learning, pious eloquence, prudence and unblemished character. Such a ministry was from the first an indispensable condition of success and growth, and as time progressed, that condition became more and more indispensable: without such a ministry Protestantism could never have passed so successfully as it did through all the conflicts and perils of the sixteenth century, or have entered on the first decades of the seventeenth with such firmness of position or strength of influence.

But among the Protestant communions Presbyterianism was foremost from the beginning in insisting on these high qualifications. The duties which are laid upon the pastor in the Form of Government (Chap. IV) are such as none but a person thoroughly trained for such service can discharge. The original Directory describes these duties in detail, and lays special stress on their being so discharged as to perfect the saints and edify the church. In its minute instructions respecting ordination to the ministerial office, the Directory required that the person be *duly qualified both for life and ministerial abilities according to the biblical rule*, and that he be duly examined and approved by the Presbytery as an ordaining body. The rules and the standard for such examination are carefully laid down, with an amount of specified learning and a degree of stringency in the testing which is hardly equaled, certainly not surpassed, even in these later times. It is doubtful whether so great qualifications were required by any other Protestant communion in that age; and the records of the Assembly show that it was as faithful in practice as in theory on this vital

matter.* This was in harmony with the nature and spirit of the Westminster Presbyterianism, both as a type of doctrine and as a system of church order; it was also in harmony with the intellectual temper and the elaborate scholarship and culture of that period in Britain. The American Form and Directory maintained the same high standard from the first; and American Presbyterianism has not failed, even at the cost of schism, to insist on substantially the same measure of preparation and equipment for the sacred office.

It remains only to be added here, that the Assembly laid down with emphasis what has been the doctrine of the Presbyterian churches ever since, as to the absolute parity or equality of those who by proper ordination hold the ministerial office. All ministers, said the Second Helvetic Conf. following the view of Calvin, are equal in power and commission: bishops and presbyters were originally the same in office. The Belgic Confession taught that all ministers have equal power and authority wheresoever they are, as they are all ministers of Christ, the only universal Bishop and the only Head of the Church. Outside of prelatic circles, this was the universal doctrine of the Reformation, even where bishops were assigned, as in some portions of northern Europe, to special supervision of the churches: See debates in the Assembly: also Savoy Declaration. This parity of the clergy is also freely accorded to all those of whatever denominational connection, who have been duly ordained by their respective communions, even though the intellectual standard of qualification be less extensive. Nor does existing Presbyterianism recognize any other mode of receiving ordination, even from episcopal hands, as superior to its own, or consent that its ministers should be regarded as inferior in official rank to those connected with any other ecclesiastical organization.

8. Worship: its nature, grounds, elements.

What has been said respecting the Christian Ordinances, and especially the Means of Grace, prepares the way for a more specific consideration of *Christian Worship*, as to its general nature and design, its particular parts or elements, and its relation to the life and growth of the visible church. The subject

*It is a fact not generally known that the Assembly acted, under instruction of Parliament, as a Board of Triers, and in that capacity approved some candidates and set aside others as incompetent or unworthy; appointed some ordained ministers to particular parishes, and refused to grant such appointment to others on the ground of inadequate qualification or of moral deficiency; and as a court deposed other ministers for unministerial conduct or for heresy or schism.

is brought before us in the Confession, Ch. XXI; in many statements and suggestions in the two Catechisms, and in seven detailed chapters in the Directory. The presence of so much judicious instruction and counsel is another illustration of the fact that the Westminster divines were after all less concerned with the grave matters of doctrine which they expounded than with those practical matters of duty and spiritual experience which in a sense rise far above all merely doctrinal issues, because they more directly affect the Christian life at its very centers. The fundamental element in worship as here described is adoration—the devout recognition of God as a Being infinitely worthy in himself, and worthy also in view of his relations to man, of the utmost veneration that man can pay. In other words, it is the offering up to God of true spiritual homage, involving not only that reverential regard which is due from all his moral creatures, but also supreme fealty, love, devotion. In still other words, it is the approach of the soul to him in the way of his own appointment in such a frame of holy fear and filial affection as is becoming to one whom he has created, is sustaining by his providence, and has owned as his subject and his child,—an approach like that which is seen in the angelic host and in the redeemed in heaven, as they cast their crowns at his feet, and with veiled faces forever cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.

In indicating the specific grounds on which this supreme duty rests, the chapter begins with the declaration that even the light of nature shows us that there is such a Being; that he hath lordship and sovereignty over all his creatures; that he is good and doeth good unto all; and that he is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all the heart and with all the soul. In the second chapter, after an extensive statement of his perfections and of his infinite exaltation above all that he has made, it is said that to God is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them. It is added, however, in the present chapter that the acceptable way of worshiping God has been instituted by himself and is clearly defined in his revealed will, and that he may not be worshiped in any other way,—no human imagination or device, or any visible representation, or suggestion of Satan, being allowed,—the only sure key and guide to acceptable worship being the Holy Scriptures. It is also said that worship is to be given not to any one person in the holy Trinity, but alike to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and to this holy Trinity only: the adoration of angels or saints or

any other creature is declared to be an offence and insult to him to whom alone the veneration of the soul is due: see Larger Catechism, 194–199. The important fact is added that since the fall God cannot be rightly approached or adored by sinful man except through some form of mediation; and further, that the only acceptable mediator is the Lord Jesus Christ, who as an intercessor presents our praises and supplications before the throne.

It was doubtless the intent of this clause to rule out the Roman heresy of the interposition either of the earthly church through its priesthood or of martyrs and glorified saints in heaven,—a heresy which has reached its ultimate point in the papal dogma of the mediation of Mary, the mother of Christ. The Augsburg Confession sums up the general position of Protestantism in the statement (XXI) that Scripture teacheth not to invocate saints or to ask help of saints, because it propoundeth unto us one Christ, the mediator, propitiatory, high priest and intercessor, who is to be invocated and who hath promised that he will hear our prayers. The Second Helvetic Conf. says: We neither adore nor invoke the departed saints, and give no one else the glory which belongs to God alone: much less do we believe that the relics of saints should be worshiped. The Thirty-Nine Articles declare that the worshiping and adoration of images or of relics, and also the invocation of saints, is a fond thing vainly invented—grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.

The conditions requisite to acceptable worship have already revealed themselves in these confessional statements. Briefly presented they are, first, intelligent belief in the existence of God as a being eternal in duration, infinite in nature, and robed in inconceivable majesty and glory; second, the recognition of those attributes, qualities, perfections, which belong to God as a being, and which give him inherent and supreme claim to our adoration: third, apprehension of all those relationships which he sustains toward us as our Father and Sovereign, and as our Preserver and bountiful Benefactor, by his tender care and love establishing still further in countless forms his inherent right to our filial veneration; fourth, the cordial acceptance of those ways of approaching him in adoration which are pointed out in the inspired Word, and conforming to his direction in each and every prescript there enjoined; fifth, the sense of dependence upon him as the true and only source of life, instinctively impelling us to seek his presence, and to find in him the end and consummation of our existence; sixth, the conscious possession of such a moral disposition, such a frame of soul, such holy desires and aspirations towards him as are

befitting in view of his tender and gracious revelations of himself; and seventh, the commitment of ourselves, with all our needs and our aspirations to the intercessory ministrations of Christ and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who alone can enable us either to pray or to praise and adore as we ought. It is obvious that these verities constitute the foundations of an obligation to worship which rests inevitably on every human being, and which is by its own nature imperative and supreme—an obligation which rises immeasurably above any and every duty which we can owe to our fellow men, and which is the broad basis of every specific duty toward God himself. And here we discern in a measure both the awful sin of idolatrous adoration of false deities, and the equally heinous sin of living in the neglect of this great primal obligation. God assuredly has the right to claim our worship, and to require that he be worshiped in spirit and in truth; and they who in Gospel lands live in chronic indifference to this supreme duty, are even more guilty in his sight than those who in pagan lands bow blindly down to idols which their hands have made.

The sixth section of the chapter relates to the place where worship is to be paid. To rebuke the disposition to venerate places as specially sacred, as the Hebrews revered the temple at Jerusalem, or as Rome has taught its adherents, it is said with emphasis that worship is under the Gospel *neither tied unto nor made more acceptable by any place* in which it is performed or toward which it is directed. This is also said in part to emphasize the duty of household and of secret or personal as well as public devotions, since God is as truly present to receive our adoration in the home or in the private chamber as in the sanctuary. Yet it is added that a special solemnity attaches to such worship in the very house of God and in the assemblies of his saints; and therefore that the *careless or willful neglect or forsaking* of such assemblies is a sin against him. Public worship on the Sabbath and at other fitting times is thus incumbent upon the church as indeed its first and chief obligation. Toward men the mission of the church is one of testimony—testimony to the existence and attributes of God, to his character and relations, his providence and his grace. There is a peculiar strength, a potent efficiency, in such organized witnessing which goes far beyond whatever evidence the individual Christian may be able to offer. But a still greater, loftier task is that of adoration, in which the face of the church is turned toward God, and in which its deepest feelings are poured out as incense before his throne. He doubtless loves the pious home where his

name is honored, and pours down upon its members his tender benediction: but there is something in the worship of the sanctuary, in the joint adoration of the assembled church, which is even more precious in his sight. The spectacle of the household of faith throughout the world thus turned toward him and expressing its veneration and love and trust in the ways which he has appointed, is the sublimest vision which our earth contains: it is a fit emblem and representative here of that unending adoration which is offered before him by angels and saints in glory.

In this chapter (sections iii–v) the divinely prescribed parts or elements of such worship are enumerated as prayer, the reading and exposition of the Scriptures, psalmody, and the administration of the sacraments. These have already been mentioned under the confessional title of the ordinances, or the means of grace, with the addition of catechising and the gathering of contributions for benevolent uses. To all these there are added here as incidental, oaths and vows, and also solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions,—all which, it is said, are in their several times and seasons to be used in an holy and religious manner. The subject of vows and oaths regarded as religious acts has already been sufficiently noted. Both fasting and thanksgiving by the Church as well as by the individual believer are alike warranted by Scripture, and upon special occasions may have marked significance as acts or forms of adoration. Catechization, which was specially enjoined also in the Sec. Helvetic Conf. XXV, and some others, and which was widely current in the Protestant communions, has ceased for the most part to be an element in church worship, though still a discipline of very great value in its relations to the instruction and nurture of the young within both the home and the church. American Presbyterianism has incorporated in its Directory a special chapter (VI) on the *Worship of God by Offerings*, in which the duty of benevolent giving in the sanctuary is enforced, the method of giving is prescribed, the uses of such gifts are designated, and the obligation of the minister to cultivate the grace of benevolence is enjoined.

9. Worship: reading, preaching, and hearing the Word.

The chapter lays special stress upon the *reading of the Scriptures* with godly fear, and the *sound preaching* and *conscionable hearing* of the Word in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith and reverence, as main or central elements in Christian worship. What has been said in general respecting the inspiration and authoritativeness and sufficiency of the Bible as a Revelation from God for the enlight-

enment and salvation of men; and what has also been said more specifically respecting the Gospel as a gracious message divinely addressed to the race, and respecting the Law of God revealed in the Scriptures as the comprehensive and universal rule of life for man, obviates the necessity for any present discussion respecting the Word which is to be read, expounded and reverently heard, as chief among the ordained means of grace. The term indicates every divine utterance given in Scripture in whatever form, and most of all the teaching of Him who in the beginning was the Word, and who became the Word, the Logos incarnate, in order to instruct and save men. The Bible is said to contain or to be that Word, and as such is to be placed in the hands of all in the vulgar or common tongue; they *having inherent right unto and interest in the Scriptures*, and being commanded individually to *read and search them*, in order that all *may worship God in an acceptable manner*. This Word is also (Direct. Chap. I: XVI) to be *read in the family*, and to be *gravely attended to* as an essential part of the household devotions. The spirit in which the Scriptures are to be read privately and in the family is described in the Larger Cat. (157), as including a high and reverent esteem for them,—a firm persuasion that they are the very Word of God, and that he alone can enable us to understand them,—a desire to know, believe and obey the will of God as revealed in them,—diligence and attention to their matter and scope, accompanied with meditation, application, self-denial and prayer. But such reading in the congregation is declared to be of still graver moment (Direct. Ch. III); and this duty, regarded as one of the regular ordinances of the sanctuary, is not to be intrusted to private or unordained persons, but is to be attended to by the appointed pastors and teachers. The proportion and amount of Scripture to be read in each service, with the current exposition of the same, is left to their discretion: and in the original Directory various practical instructions are given to such pastors as to the selection of particular portions, such as the Psalms; to the reading of the whole Bible in course, excluding the Apocrypha; and especially to the *distinct* and careful reading *so that all may hear and understand.*

The expounding and application of the doctrines and duties contained in the Bible, and of whatever else in Revelation bears upon the Christian life whether in the individual disciple or in the church, have in all ages been regarded as essential features of spiritual Christianity. Provision for such instruction and edification of the church has very clear warrant in the New Testament,

as the Epistles to Timothy and Titus as well as other references abundantly show, and is fully justified also by the known usage of the apostolic church. Justin Martyr tells us that in his day discourses on the truths of religion and exhortations to holy living were delivered by the presiding bishop, in conjunction with the reading of the Scriptures and the observance of the sacrament of the Supper, on each recurring Sabbath. Such preaching, sometimes simple and crude and hortatory, sometimes more elaborate and ornate, as in the case of men like Origen and Ambrose, Chrysostom and Augustine, continued to be a conspicuous part of public worship, until it was by degrees supplanted, and in some centuries almost wholly excluded, by the ceremonials and sacerdotalisms of both the Greek and the Roman communions. The restoration of preaching to its true place among the Christian ordinances was one of the first and one of the greatest achievements of the primitive Protestantism. It was to that restoration as a practical measure that the rapid diffusion of gospel truth, the deepened convictions respecting the essential doctrines of grace, and the broader experience of vital religion in central and northern Europe were very largely due. The Reformation not only placed a free Bible in the hands of all men in languages with which they were familiar, but also produced a noble race of preachers with whom the less educated and less spiritual clergy of Rome were powerless to compete. The creeds of the Reformation show what supreme emphasis was everywhere laid upon this function of preaching, and the biographies of its great leaders and preachers show how thoroughly such teaching was believed and put into practice. Nor has there been any period since that age when, with some incidental exceptions, this function has not retained the conspicuous place thus assigned to it. Even when the preaching has become dogmatic and fossilized, or crude and shallow in its exposition of divine truth, or has degenerated into rhetorical show or mere speculative moralizing about divine things, it yet has retained a singular hold upon the church almost universally as being, amid all its defects and aberrations, still a permanent ordinance of God.

All those qualifications, personal, intellectual, spiritual, which are said in the Form of Gov., Chap. IV, and elsewhere, to be requisite in the minister of Christ, are essential in a special sense in this central task of preaching,—more and more essential as each new period in the history of the church develops wider ranges of sacred truth, deeper necessities in man and in human life, and vaster opportunities for the promulgation of the Gospel to the

race. These qualifications pertain in part to what the preacher must be as a Christian man,—a subject of sanctifying influence, living in communion with Christ, possessing in special measure those spiritual virtues which belong alike to all believers, and animated by peculiar impartations of grace in view of his sacred calling. They are also in part such as pertain to his office and his personal endowment for its special duties. It is presupposed, says the original Directory, that the minister of Christ is in some good measure gifted for so weighty a service as preaching by his skill in the original languages and in such arts and sciences as are handmaids to divinity,—by his knowledge in the whole body of theology, but first of all in the Holy Scriptures, having his senses and heart exercised in them above the common sort of believers,—and by the illumination of God's Spirit and other gifts of edification which (together with reading and studying the Word) he ought to seek by prayer and an humble heart, resolving to admit and receive any truth not yet attained, whenever God shall make it known unto him. It is not needful to attempt any other description of the intellectual and spiritual requisites to the successful preaching of the Gospel, than is contained in these pregnant sentences. And the fidelity with which the Westminster divines applied these searching tests, first to themselves, and then to those who through them sought ordination to the ministerial office, must ever be counted among their special, even distinguishing, qualities as Christian men. The American Directory sums up the whole in the statement that preaching requires *much study, meditation and prayer;* and that they who preach ought also *by their lives to adorn the doctrine which they preach.* The Amer. Form of Gov. (XIV–XV) also warns against degrading the ministerial office by *committing it to weak or unworthy men*, requires that all candidates for that office shall be carefully examined respecting their experimental acquaintance with religion, and prescribes with no less care than the original Directory all those intellectual attainments which are essential to efficiency in the proclamation of the Word.

The method and spirit of Christian preaching are also presented with special fullness in the Symbols. The Amer. Directory teaches that great attention should be paid to the manner as well as matter of preaching, and that diligent application at all points is indispensable to the right discharge of a service which involves the salvation of men. It also says that ministers ought to prepare their sermons with care, *never indulging in loose, extemporary harangues*, or serving God with that which cost them naught:

and that they ought to *keep to the simplicity of the Gospel*, making their language conformable to the Scriptures, and level to the apprehension of the meanest of their hearers, and carefully avoiding ostentation whether of parts or learning:—as stated in the original Directory,—shunning all such gesture, voice and expressions as may occasion the corruption of men to despise them and their ministry. The subject of the sermon, it is further said, should be some verse or verses of Scripture, selected with a view to the explaining, defending or applying some part of the system of divine truth, or to pointing out the nature and stating the bounds and application of some duty. It also advised that, in order to instruct the people in the meaning and use of the sacred oracles, larger portions of Scripture may sometimes be expounded for spiritual improvement; and finally that the sermon in whatever form should never be so long as to *interfere with or exclude the more important duties of prayer and praise.** The Larger Cate-

*The original Directory contains what the special needs of the age probably required, a much more full and detailed account of the qualities essential in the sermon, and of the manner and temper in which the sermon should be presented to the congregation: in fact, one finds in it the substance of an excellent treatise on practical homiletics. In illustration the following extracts may be introduced here under the several heads suggested in the Directory:

SUBJECT: Ordinarily the subject of his sermon is to be some text of Scripture, holding forth some principle or head of religion, as suitable to some special occasion emergent.

INTRODUCTION: Let the introduction to his text be brief and perspicuous, drawn from the text itself or context, or some parallel place or general sentence of Scripture.

TEXT: If the text be long, let him give a brief sum of it; if short, a paraphrase thereof, if need be; in both, looking diligently at the scope of the text.

DIVISION: In analysing and dividing his text, he is to regard more the order of matter than of words; neither burdening the memory of his hearers with too many members of division, nor troubling their minds with obscure terms of art.

PROPOSITION: In raising doctrines from the text his care ought to be, first, that the matter be the truth of God; secondly, that it be a truth grounded on that text; and thirdly, that he insist on those doctrines which are principally intended and make most for the edification of the hearers.

STATEMENT OF DOCTRINE: The doctrine is to be expressed in plain terms; if anything in it need explication, it is to be opened and the consequence from the text cleared. Parallel passages of Scripture confirming the doctrine, plain and pertinent, rather than many, are to be applied.

ARGUMENTS: The arguments or reasons are to be solid and, as much as may be, convincing. The illustrations, of what kind soever, ought to be full of light, and such as may convey the truth to the hearer with spiritual delight.

OBJECTIONS MET: If any doubt obvious from Scripture, reason, or prejudice of the hearer, seem to arise, it is very requisite to remove it by

chism adds the crowning feature to the entire description in the declaration (159) that they that are called to labor in the ministry of the Word are to preach sound (free from error and spiritually healthful) doctrine, *diligently*, in season and out of season; *plainly*, not in enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; *faithfully*, making known the whole counsel of God; *wisely*, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; *zealously*, with fervent love to God and to the souls of his people; *sincerely*, aiming at his glory and their conversion, edification and salvation.

It is not needful to emphasize here the immeasurable solemnity, the peculiar dignity, or the recompense, temporal and eternal, involved in such faithful preaching of the divine Word. *Conscionable hearing* is the antithetic duty enjoined not only in the Symbols but in other Protestant Catechisms and Confessions. We should so fear and love God, taught Luther in his Short Catechism, as not to despise preaching and his Word, but deem it holy and willingly hear and learn it: and in the Larger Catechism

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reconciling the seeming difficulties, answering the reasons, and discovering and taking away the causes of error or mistake.

APPLICATION: He is not to rest in general doctrine, although never so much cleared and confirmed, but to bring it home to special use: which albeit it prove a work of great difficulty to himself, yet he is to endeavor to perform it in such a manner that his auditors may feel the Word of God to be quick and powerful.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS: In the use of instruction or information given, he may confirm it by a few firm arguments from the text in hand and other places of Scripture, or from the nature of some common-place in divinity whereof that truth is a part.

In confuting false doctrines, he is neither to raise an old heresy from the grave, nor to mention a blasphemous opinion unnecessarily: but if the people be in danger of an error, he is to confute it soundly.

In exhorting to duties, he is, as he seeth cause, to teach also the means that help to the performance of them. In dehortation, reprehension and public admonition, let him as there shall be cause not only discover the nature and greatness of the sin, but also show the danger his hearers are in to be overtaken by it.

In applying comfort, whether general or particular, he is carefully to answer such objections as a troubled heart and afflicted spirit may suggest to the contrary. It is sometimes necessary to give notes of trial whereby the hearers may be able to examine themselves, whether they have attained those graces and performed those duties to which he exhorteth.

As he needeth not always to prosecute every doctrine which lies in his text, so is he wisely to make choice of such uses as, by his residence and conversing with his flock, he findeth most needful and reasonable: amongst these, such as may most draw their souls to Christ, the fountain of light, holiness and comfort.

he teaches that the Word of God is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries—the treasure which makes all things holy and by which the saints are sanctified,—and that whatever hour or place the Word is taught, preached, heard, read or considered, the person and day and place and work are thereby hallowed. The Heidelberg Catechism (83) pronounces the preaching of the holy Gospel one of the two keys, by which the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers, and shut against unbelievers. The church cannot exist, said the French Confession (XXV) without pastors for instruction, whom we should respect and reverently listen to, when they are properly called and exercise their office faithfully. And the Synod of Dort affirmed (Fifth Head: 14) that as it hath pleased God by the preaching of the Gospel to begin the work of grace in us, so he preserves, continues and perfects that work by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings and promises thereof. Protestantism thus enjoined universally the duty of hearing as correlative to the duty of preaching,—not only calling upon all to be habitually in the sanctuary when the Word was preached, but sometimes even compelling such attendance by civil enactments and civil penalties.

Conscionable hearing is repeatedly set forth in the Symbols, specially in the Directory and the two Catechisms, as an imperative obligation. The qualities of acceptable hearing are also given in detail. The Larger Catechism sums up the whole in the discriminating statement (160) that those who hear the Word preached should *attend upon it* with diligence, preparation and prayer,—that they should *examine what they hear* by the Scriptures,—that they should *receive the truth* with faith, love, meekness and readiness of mind as the Word of God,—that they should meditate and confer upon it, hide it in their hearts, and *bring forth the fruit of it in their lives.* The peril of neglect of the ordinance of preaching, the sin of disregarding the Sabbath and the sanctuary in their relation to the preaching of the Word, the guilt of hardening the heart against the gracious proclamation, and of blunting religious appeal through worldly indulgence or engrossment, are all set forth with corresponding distinctness and solemnity in the extended comments on the Ten Commandments, (L. Cat. 104–153) and elsewhere. And the final condemnation of the wicked is said to turn generically upon their neglect of the light of nature, revealing to them a God worthy to be loved, praised, called upon and trusted in, and specially on their disobedience to the call of grace sounding forth from the revealed

Word—*hardening their hearts under those means which God useth for the softening of others.*

Another main element in public worship, named in the Symbols, is *prayer*,—including under that term praise and thanksgiving on one side and sincere confession on the other. Prayer is admirably defined in the Larger Cat. (178) as the *offering up of our desires unto God* in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit, with *confession of our sins*, and thankful *acknowledgment of his mercies.* The Shorter Cat. (98) adds the important clause, *for things agreeable to his will.* We may properly reverse the order of these specifications, and consider, first, the offering of praise, together with thanksgiving in view of the divine mercies. Praise distinctively speaking is defined by Edwards in his Treatise on the Will (Part III: 1) as the exercise or testimony of some sort of esteem, respect and honorable regard. He argues that such exercise and testimony are due to God as a Being in whom is all possible virtue, and every virtue in the most absolute purity and perfection, and in infinitely greater brightness and amiableness than appear in any creature—the most perfect pattern of virtue, and the fountain from whom all the virtue of others flows as beams from the sun: and who on account of his virtue and holiness is infinitely more worthy to be esteemed, loved, honored, admired, commended, extolled and praised than any creature. Edwards further argues that the fact that God as a Being is under a species of moral necessity to be what he is here described, does not diminish but rather increases our obligation to praise him,—adoring him as the possessor of such supreme excellence, and testifying in all possible ways to our appreciative estimate of his character and perfections. The duty of thus praising God for what he is, may properly be brought into the foreground as the supreme task of his church, when assembled together in his earthly sanctuaries. Such holy fear, humble veneration, filial love, adoration in this most primary sense, are ever due to him from his redeemed people, and most of all when they are convened in the holy place.

10. Worship: praise, confession, supplication.

Thanksgiving involves another element,—the recognition of this supreme Being as the source of all the numberless blessings and privileges of life, and the expression of appropriate gratitude for all his bestowments. True gratitude is always a reflexive emotion: it carries the soul beyond the gift, and fixes the thought upon the giver and upon the motives animating him in the conferring of favor. As exercised toward God, it involves kindly

feeling, tender appreciation, the sense of indebtedness, the consequent desire to respond to his beneficence by every practicable expression of loyalty to him and of readiness to serve as well as adore him. The Catechism of Luther, after a lengthy enumeration of the blessings bestowed on us by providence, adds: All this out of pure, paternal divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine: for all which I am in duty bound to thank, praise, serve and obey him: see also Heid. Cat. 86, 116. Such gratitude, measured by the more or less impressive consciousness of the divine kindness and mercy, is a sentiment inherent in every true Christian: and when it is awakened by the proper apprehension of the grace of God in Christ and in redemption conferred through him, it rises to the loftiest point which such a holy emotion can attain in this life,—an experience introductory to the grateful casting of the crowns of the redeemed before the throne in heaven. Such thanksgiving to God should be an abiding state of soul in the believer, ever expressing itself in the secret chamber, at the family altar and elsewhere as opportunity may occur. But most fitting is such thanksgiving when believers are assembled in the house of God, to praise and adore him in the great congregation. Here most of all should their gratitude pour forth its holy fragrance in his presence, and their responsive sacrifices be offered on his altar.

The American Directory contains in the chapter (V) on Prayer, express instruction that thanks be thus given to God in the sanctuary for all his mercies of every kind, general and particular, spiritual and temporal, common and special; and above all, for Jesus Christ, his unspeakable gift, and for the hope of eternal life through him. It contains also a suggestive chapter (IV) on *the singing of psalms or hymns* as a mode of praising God and expressing gratitude toward him in the sanctuary,—such singing to be, it is said, with both spirit and understanding and with true melody of heart, becoming in manner, and with some knowledge of the rules of music,—the entire exercise having its due place and proportion in the public worship. In the original Directory, in connection with the appointment of special seasons of thanksgiving, it is explicitly said: Because the singing of psalms is of all other the most proper ordinance for expressing of joy and thanksgiving, let some pertinent psalm or psalms be sung for that purpose: and the minister at such seasons is counselled to enlarge himself in due and solemn thanksgiving for former mercies and deliverances, with humble petition for the continuance of such mercies as need shall be, and for sanctifying

grace to make a right use thereof. It is a fact of interest in this connection that the Assembly, acting upon an order of the House of Commons, took up the version of the Psalms by Francis Rous—who was himself a member of the Assembly, and also of Parliament—carefully perused them, made some alterations and amendments, approved them by formal vote, and commended them to be publicly sung in the churches as being useful and profitable: Minutes, 131, 163, 221.*

The other elements to be considered under the general title of prayer, are petition and confession—the offering up our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will, and the acknowledgment of our sins before him. Such acknowledgment has already been considered, so far as the individual Christian is concerned, as one feature of true repentance. If we recall for a moment the sublime description of Edwards, and in any intelligent measure discern what a being God is, we realize at once the fundamental truth that no human soul can ever approach him otherwise than with sincere and poignant confession—confession not alone in view of specific acts or desires or thoughts of evil, but still more on account of that sinfulness which is resident in the nature, and which compels us to veil our faces, and cry, Unclean, Unclean, in his holy presence. But the church needs also to come before God in this attitude of acknowledgment and contrition: it cannot fitly worship him in any other attitude: it must ever bow and kneel, as with tears, before his throne. In the Directory, (Ch. V) the assembled company of believers are called upon to *make humble confession of sin, both original and actual*, with a deep sense of the evil of all sin,—to acknowledge particular sins in thought, word and deed, secret and presumptuous, accidental or habitual, whether committed against God, against our neighbors or ourselves,—to realize the aggravations of sin, arising

*Gillespie, in his report to the Scotch General Assembly, 1647, said of the version of Rous: This new Paraphrase was done by a Gentleman verie able for the purpose, but it was afterwards revised by a Committee of the Assembly, and was approven by the whole Assembly. Baillie in his Journal pronounced this version the best beyond all doubt that ever yet was extant; and declared his belief that these lines are likely to go up to God from many millions of tongues for many generations. Another version by Barton, though recommended by the House of Lords, was set aside by the Assembly, chiefly on the ground that the introduction of various paraphrases would be a great distraction and hindrance to edification. The Appendix to the third volume of the Journal contains an extensive and very valuable Note by David Laing, on the history of the various British versions of the Psalms, from Sternhold to Rous. See also the Gude and Godlie Ballatis, edited with an introduction, by Prof. Mitchell.

from knowledge, from distinguishing mercies, and from valuable privilege,—and to make most earnest supplication for the pardon of sin and peace with God through Christ, and for support and comfort in the endeavor to overcome all sin in the future. That such confession as this is due from the church as truly as from the individual, and that none can approach God successfully in the offering up of desires personal or public for things agreeable to divine will, on any other basis, is assumed constantly in the Symbols, and is everywhere recognized by the household of faith.

Prayer, in the special sense of supplication, has been well described as the characteristic act of religion, and eminently—when coupled with praise and confession—the characteristic act of the Christian religion. The natural faiths of the world indeed make some provision for the plaintive outcry of the soul, when burdened with the consciousness of dependence upon some superhuman power or agency, from whose hands the needed blessing may be solicited. But Christianity alone carefully defines prayer, indicates the scope and range of acceptable petition, describes the method in which our supplications may be presented, reveals a gracious and effectual mediation which assures to us the hearing of our desires, gives encouragement and spiritual help to the petitioner, and justifies prayer by multiplied promises of accceptance and of adequate answer. Evangelical Protestantism from the first, while rejecting with vehemence the papal formalisms in prayer, with their consequence in the dogma of priestly intercession and absolution through the church, joyously accepted the more biblical view, justified it by earnest argument, wrought it into its confessions, and day by day lived upon it in unswerving confidence and hope. The Reformers were one and all prayerful men, believing with Zwingli that they alone are the true worshipers who call upon God in spirit and in truth, praying from the heart, not with clamor in the presence of men. They agreed with the more elaborate discussion of Calvin, (Inst. B. III : 20) respecting prayer as the principal exercise of faith and the medium through which we receive divine blessings,—a doctrine which he applied to the church as well as to individual believers, enjoining prayer upon the church as one of its great primal duties and chief privileges also. By prayer, he says, we penetrate to those riches which are reserved by our heavenly Father for our use : the only fortress of salvation consists in the invocation of his name. . . . The duty of prayer is a principal part of his worship, and the sanctuary has been erected as a standard for believers, in order that they might engage in prayer with one consent. The

Protestant communions both Lutheran and Reformed, while differing as to this or that form or method of public prayer, were fully agreed from the first in the conviction that such prayer, worthily offered, is a real power in both the sphere of providence and the sphere of grace.

How thoroughly the divines of Westminster believed in prayer, we have many and diversified evidences in the Symbols. It is needful only to refer to some of these in brief terms in order to obtain a full conception of this primal duty, and to note the safeguards suggested against serious mistakes in prayer. It is noticeable at once that we are never at liberty to offer up our desires to God for anything concerning which we have not just ground for hoping that the granting of the answer will be *agreeable to his will* and for his glory. At least, all supplication is to be offered conditionally—with cordial acquiescence in the decision of the divine will, whether it be to grant or to withhold. Again: it should be noted that all acceptable prayer must be offered *in the name of Christ*,—in virtue of his mediation and intercession, and of his merits graciously reflected upon us. The renunciation of all other merit as the basis of a claim or right to be answered, whether it be our own or that of others, or that of the priesthood or the church, or that of glorified saints in Paradise, is an indispensable condition. Again: acceptable prayer can be offered only *by the help of the Spirit*, who knows what petitions are agreeable to the divine will, and what are worthy of a hearing in the name of Christ, and who therefore is competent to show us what we ought to pray for, and is himself ready in a sense to pray within us,—making prayer in fact a gracious mystery wherein God and man are joined together, as in conversion or sanctification. Public as well as private prayer—we are taught again and again—is always subject to these three primal conditions: agreeableness to the divine will and glory, the mediatorial intercession of Christ, the inward guidance and superintending efficiency of the Holy Ghost.

It is further said (section iv) that prayer may be made, not only for things that are lawful, and desirable for us personally, but also for the whole church of Christ on earth, for magistrates and ministers, for our brethren and even for our enemies, and generally *for all sorts of men living*, and even for those that may live hereafter. But prayer *for the dead*, such as Romanism encouraged and justified, is expressly forbidden,—doubtless on the ground that their eternal state is not to be changed through the intercessions of the earthly church. There is no warrant whatever in Scripture for

the opinion that such intercessions can be of benefit to the sainted dead, either in any improvement in their beatific condition or in hastening on their progressive sanctification. Still less is there biblical warrant for the hope that such intercessions can raise the unsanctified dead into any better condition, or be effectual in securing their salvation in the intermediate life through belief in Christ. It is also said that prayer is not to be offered for those persons of whom it may be known that they have sinned the *sin unto death*,—a clause that was omitted in the recent Revision, on the ground that it is not given to man to know assuredly that any particular person has been guilty of that unpardonable offence against divine grace, and that it might be dangerous for the church to assume for itself the possession of such knowledge. The further fact is emphasized that prayer is not to be confined to any one place or time or form, since God may be appealed to by his children in any time or place, and will hear their cry for help in whatever form it may be presented. Public prayer in a foreign tongue is forbidden, it being—in the language of the Thirty-Nine Articles—plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have prayer in the church in a tongue not understanded of the people: Sec. Helvetic, XXIII. It is also enjoined upon the minister that by study of the Scriptures, by meditation, and by a life of communion with God in secret, he diligently prepare himself in a general way, and specifically also, for this part of the public service; and he is pertinently warned against making excessively long prayers, or disgracing that service by *mean, irregular or extravagant effusions*. Other kindred injunctions are introduced in the two Directories, and in the original Directory an extended formula is given for each of the three prayers commonly offered in public worship.

11. Concluding Survey: Ritual, Liturgies; Sacred times.

It is impracticable to refer here to the somewhat minute instructions furnished in the two Directories with regard to other forms of ministry, such as the religious solemnization of marriage, the pastoral visitation of the sick, and the public burial of the dead. The chapters on these subjects, taken together with those already referred to constitute, if not an informal ritual, still a practical manual for the guidance of ministers in fulfilling their office in these several directions. The Preface to the original Directory contains a very earnest protest against the Book of Common Prayer, as prepared and used by English Episcopacy, declaring among other things that it had proved an offence, not only to many of the godly at

home, but also to the Reformed churches abroad; that it had debarred many able and faithful ministers from the exercise of their office, and been injurious in its effects upon the laity; and that it tended toward the restoration of the papal liturgy, with all its formalisms and idolatries. Some members of the Assembly, the eminent Lightfoot among them, strongly advocated set forms of prayer, but failed to secure general assent to their opinions. But while thus putting itself on record against all liturgical impositions, and in favor of full liberty in public devotions, the Assembly recognized the importance of supplying the churches with some uniform method of divine service, and also of giving to the ministers some *help and furniture*—to quote the phrase of the Directory—as a corrective to sloth or negligence and a stimulant to the highest measure of spiritual efficiency.

It will be remembered that in the preparation of such a manual of worship, the Assembly was acting in accordance with the direct instruction of Parliament,—that body being desirous of sweeping away the liturgy of Episcopacy as well as all other forms of Episcopal rule. Yet it was regarded by both Parliament and Assembly as important that some regular order of public devotions, as being an indispensable adjunct in the constitution of a national church, should not only be commended, but in a measure enforced by legislative action. From such a mixed political and ecclesiastical condition arose the primitive Directory—issued even before the preparation of the Confession and Catechisms had been fairly begun,—which for a brief time became the authoritative manual of public worship, not only in England but also in Scotland and throughout the British Isles. The General Assembly of Scotland, shortly after its publication in 1645, unanimously approved it in all the heads thereof, ordered that it be carefully and uniformly observed and practiced by all the ministers of the kingdom, and with much joy and thankfulness welcomed the uniformity in religion thus secured. The Scotch Parliament also without a contrary voice approved and ratified the Directory,—thus interposing and adding the authority of the civil power to the act of the General Assembly. In its general structure and in many of its specific instructions, this Directory illustrates the mediate position which the Assembly sought to maintain. There are in it some surviving traces of the ritualistic spirit and tendency which had held sway so largely in England from the earliest days of the Reformation; yet in the main it was probably as well fitted to secure not only uniformity but also liberty in worship, as any such mandatory document could have been. American

Presbyterianism early discovered the necessity for modification in the further interest of liberty; and therefore, in 1729, simply recommended that the Directory be used in the churches *as near as circumstances will allow and Christian prudence direct.* The first Assembly, following the Synod of 1786, also recommended it as in substance agreeable to the instructions of the New Testament, but affirmed in the same connection that God has not been pleased to reveal and enjoin every circumstance of church government or administration. Later on, various emendations were from time to time introduced, until now the Directory presents itself in a form which, though full of valuable instruction as a general guide, allows all needful freedom and variety in public devotions.

The general question whether a fixed liturgy is desirable in church worship, is one which cannot be answered positively or negatively in the abstract, whether the proof be sought from Scripture, from the usage of the early church, or from practical experiment. In the Roman Catholic communion such a liturgy easily correlates itself to the papal conception of the priesthood, and has indeed been regarded as obligatory by biblical authority, and even as one of the essential marks or signs of the true church. It may be admitted also that a mode of worship so formal and spectacular, having in it so much to attract the senses of the worshiper, has been at times an element of great power among the nations and races where the church of Rome has been most successful in gathering adherents. That the more moderate and spiritual liturgies established in some Protestant communions, have proved themselves valuable as helps in public devotion, and that there are classes of persons who find themselves greatly aided through such liturgical ministrations, may be admitted with equal freedom. The Augsburg Conf. teaches that those ecclesiastical rites are to be observed which can be observed without sin, and are profitable for tranquility and good order in the Church. We may note also that Luther prepared a brief ritual, as early as 1526, and Calvin framed a liturgy in 1541, though without excluding free prayer; and that John Knox twelve years later proposed a form of public worship based on that which he had found in use at Geneva—measures doubtless required by the necessities of the Protestant churches, just emerging from the picturesque discipline of Rome. Nor is it too much to confess that what are called in our Directory *mean, irregular and extravagant effusions* in prayer, like the *loose, extemporary harangues* in the pulpit rebuked by the same document, have too often impaired and even disgraced—to use the strong phrase of

the Directory—the worship of communions where liturgies are rejected and condemned. Yet it is an obvious fact that Protestantism has in the main pronounced against fixed liturgical forms, and has strongly preferred freer, less rigid and less ceremonious modes of offering divine worship. The reasons for such preference need not be discussed here. Perhaps the Protestant spirit in its profound love of liberty and its spontaneous hostility to all that binds thought or emotion no less than action in the religious sphere, furnishes all needful explanation. It is certain that the positive judgment of Presbyterianism, and especially of the Presbyterian churches in America, is habitually adverse by tradition and by instinct to ritualism in whatever variety. A free worship, guided by Christian intelligence and stimulated in every part by active piety in both minister and people, has been, now is, and is likely to be, one of its cardinal characteristics.

The Assembly in the same spirit resolved after considerable debate that the Sabbath is the only holy day enjoined in the New Testament to be kept by all the churches of Christ, expressed itself as opposed to all other holy days excepting fasts and thanksgivings when duly ordered, and condemned all parish feasts and the like, under the garb of religion, as profane and superstitious. One record tells us, however (Minutes, 3, 21), that the Assembly conferred with Parliament on the observance of Christmas as a fast to be kept in all the churches. Canonical hours, such as are observed according to the Roman Breviary, were condemned by one of the Helvetic Confessions as unwarranted by tradition, and in themselves unprofitable; and the observance of such hours was disregarded by early Protestantism almost universally. No traces of the Christian or Ecclesiastical Year, so prominent a feature in Roman ritualism, appear in the Symbols. One of the continental creeds, however, approves of the annual observance of the times of the nativity, circumcision, passion, resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the descent of the Spirit upon the early church. Episcopacy and Lutheranism have extensively followed such observance, but the Reformed churches have generally set it aside, with the possible exception of Christmas and Easter, as without biblical warrant and of doubtful propriety.

LECTURE FOURTEENTH—ESCHATOLOGY.

MILLENNIUM: DEATH: IMMORTALITY: JUDGMENT: THE INTERMEDIATE LIFE: FUTURE SALVATION: FINAL ADVENT: RESURRECTION: GENERAL JUDGMENT: THE ETERNAL ESTATE.

C. F. CH. XXXII–XXXIII. L. C. 82–90: 190–2. S. C. 19, 37–8, 102.

While the Scriptures principally teach what man is now to believe concerning God and what duty God now requires of man, the Bible is also both history and prophecy. On one hand it presents in an accurate and faithful form the moral record of our race from the instant of creation, through the era of the fall, and through the long and dark career of our humanity as sinful, down to the advent of Christ and the introduction of the plan of salvation through his mediatorial work and sacrifice. On the other hand it foretells with equal fidelity, and doubtless with equal accuracy, the moral career of our race, not through some brief intervening periods or ages in the future, but down to the last instant of earthly time,—describing with singular clearness and pathos all that is to transpire to the church or to the world until the final consummation of earthly things. Its revelations reach even beyond all time, and include in their sweep the life to come, both for the individual and for mankind,—prophesying what eternity shall be, and what shall be the character and experience and destiny of men forever and forever. It was therefore most fitting that the Westminster Assembly should conclude its methodical and profound exposition of Christian doctrine and Christian duty with two brief but most impressive chapters concerning the *Things which shall be Hereafter*. Having set forth the teachings of Scripture concerning the creation and the fall, providence and sin and law, Christ and his redemptive grace, the Christian life in its various phases, the Church of God on earth with all that is comprised within that holy organism,—having traversed thus the broad domain of revealed truth, and having so far as they were able crystalized into enduring form the contents of Revelation on all these subjects, the men of Westminster realized that the Bible, as one vast and sublime prophecy including all the future, needed

also to be formulated in like manner, specially for the enlightening and comfort of the people of God.

As a department or section of Christian doctrine, what is termed Eschatology covers a very extensive area. It embraces all that the Word of God, and also the illustrative providence of God, discloses concerning the future of our world as a material structure, concerning the human race in its moral developments on earth, and especially concerning the future condition and career of the church and kingdom of Christ in this world. It includes the transition of mankind individually and collectively from the scenes and experiences of the present life to an eternal state;—death in both its natural and moral aspects; the problem of immortality, with respect to both the righteous and the wicked; the counter theory of annihilation; the nature of the intermediate life; the dogma of purgatory, the theory of a probation for man after death, the hypothesis of final restoration. It includes also the general conception of eternity as a state, not of probationary discipline, but of award and retribution according to the deeds done in the body; the particular judgment in the case of each soul at death, and the ultimate judgment pronounced upon the race; and as involved in this, the second coming of Christ as the Judge of all men, the resurrection of the body, and the end of the world. It embraces also a survey of the final character and condition of the wicked, and also of the character and condition of the godly amid the employments and felicities of heaven, together with the question of the endlessness of this future estate. And finally it embraces a view of the ultimate consummation of all things, when the process of Messiahship shall cease, and the kingdom shall be surrendered to the Father, and when the work of human redemption shall be unfolded in its full intent and effect throughout the cycles of Eternity.

1. Eschatology defined; Early creed statements; Protestant eschatology.

It is not surprising that such a department of Christian doctrine, springing directly from the disclosures of Scripture, should be in many ways pressed upon the attention of devout men in all ages. There is in the human mind a native desire to know the future and the end of things,—the future of religion and of the Church in this world, and the effect of Christianity upon the moral life and character of the human race,—the future of the Christian man, evidently imperfect now, but plainly having within himself the beginnings of a moral experience, far outreaching his present state of being, and apparently rising toward some

ultimate perfection of immeasurable beauty and glory, — the future also of the providential and moral administration of God over the human race, now evidently in a state of progress, and in its present developments apparently incomplete, yet clearly moving on toward some appropriate and sublime consummation at last. But this natural desire to know the future of things is vastly enhanced by the consciousness that we are ourselves to share in this complex and tremendous future, both as to our personal work and career in this world, and to our individual experiences in and after death, and also as to our unending life and condition thereafter. There are also many unfulfilled prophecies in Scripture, intimations of events to come, which apparently involve the destiny of the whole world and all its inhabitants, and which therefore are of absorbing interest to the Christian mind,—predictions in both the Old Testament and the New, concerning the glorious progress of the Church in some coming millennial age, the downfall of Babylon and of Antichrist, the final conflicts with the Gogs and Magogs of unbelief, the victory of the Christian Truth, and finally the second coming of Christ unto judgment. It is obvious further that Christian faith finds within this department of doctrine one of its highest stimulants, not merely in the form of trust or resignation in view of the fact that God is carrying forward such a process as this in human history, but also in the form of encouragement to intense activity in view of such an assured and blessed outcome of all Christian service and sacrifice. Nor is it a slight stimulus to such believing and loving interest, that so many strenuous controversies have arisen in the church respecting many of these eschatological revelations, or that current skepticism has found within this field so many points of attack, and has claimed for itself such positive victories over the biblical doctrine. For all these reasons, and for still others kindred to these, Christian Eschatology has often commanded in the past, and now is specially commanding the deepest interest, the most thoughtful and earnest study, of those who believe in that sure word of prophecy on which our hopes and the hope of humanity are resting.

It is impracticable to speak at any length of the sources from which knowledge may be obtained and Christian faith be nourished within this broad department,—of the Scriptures above all, notwithstanding the difficult problems of interpretation involved, and the evident obscuration divinely allowed at many points where wider knowledge might seem desirable,—of the concurrent and converging providences of God, often impenetrable or

but partly comprehended, yet in the main shedding a clear and ever growing light upon the teachings of the inspired Word,—of the tributary value also of the deepest and wisest philosophy, with its helpful analogies from nature and its profound endorsement of much that the Bible teaches respecting the moral constitution of man, the nature of sin, the possibilities of grace, and the natural issues of conduct both here and hereafter,—or of the aid which spiritual insight and spiritual experience afford, in confirming the essential reasonableness of the divine revelations, and in enabling the soul to appreciate them, and build them intelligently into the solid structure of its faith. That these sources of knowledge are sufficient to meet, or were divinely intended to answer, all the questionings which a speculative intellect may propose, is not to be claimed; nor is it desirable that such questionings, often springing from mental curiosity or from subtle hostility to the truth as revealed, should receive complete present solution. But that much, if not all that might be desired or all that may hereafter be learned, may from these sources be already known, believed, cherished, and made part of the firm faith and doctrine of the Church is abundantly manifest.

It is a most suggestive fact that the three ancient creeds, accepted almost from the beginning, held in reverence through all the centuries preceding the Reformation, and now received not merely by the Greek and Roman communions but by all sections of evangelical Protestantism,—the Te Deum of the ages—contain so much of positive teaching respecting the things that are to be. These creeds agree in declaring, first, that our ascended Lord, of whom they all speak as now sitting at the right hand of God the Father, shall come again to this earth with glory, to be the judge of the quick (or living) and the dead; secondly, that at his coming unto judgment all the dead shall rise again with their bodies; thirdly, that all shall give account of their works and their lives before his tribunal; fourthly, that there is a life everlasting, into which all shall finally pass at his adjudication; fifthly, that they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into a life of everlasting condemnation; and sixthly, that the kingdom of righteousness, and of authority which is thus established, shall never end. It will be noticed that these six declarations are statements, not of theory or speculation, but of facts or events to come,—as clear and positive as those which precede them in these ancient symbols concerning the first advent and life, the passion and resurrection of our Lord; and further that they are affirmed on the direct authority of

Scripture, and largely in the very words of Holy Writ. It is also noticeable that, though these clear affirmations have often been challenged, and have sometimes been rejected by individuals or by nominally Christian sects, yet such opposition has rarely if ever attempted to sustain itself by counter biblical warrant; and further that, notwithstanding such opposition, the Church universal has clung to them through all the centuries, and with hardly any exception still clings, as not only containing what the Bible teaches but also what that Church now profoundly believes.

Descending from the ancient to more recent symbolism, it may be remarked that one cannot appreciate at its full value the eschatology of the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster, unless he is familiar in some degree with the teaching of the Protestant creeds in general, and also with the prevalent theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in this department. It is clear that the Westminster divines inherited a definite scheme of doctrine on the topics embraced in this department, to a large extent as we have seen, from the church antecedent to the Reformation, but still more decisively from the professed faith of the various churches which bore the Protestant name. The Augsburg Confession, for example, teaches (Art. XVII) that in the consummation of the world Christ shall appear to judge, and shall raise up all the dead, and shall give unto the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys; but ungodly men and the devils shall he condemn unto endless torments. It also enters a solemn protest against those who imagine that there shall be an end of such torments, and formally condemns those who scatter abroad Jewish notions (Judaicas opiniones) to the effect that before the resurrection of the dead, the godly or the saints shall, for a time, occupy the kingdom of this world—shall set up and enjoy an earthly dominion, the wicked everywhere being suppressed or exterminated. The Second Helvetic Conf. in the same strain condemns (XI) the Jewish dreams (Judaica somnia) to the effect that before the day of judgment there shall be a golden age on the earth when the pious shall hold all authority and their impious enemies shall be under their feet.

The Confession of Edward VI, from which the Thirty-Nine Articles sprang, declares that they who attempt to reproduce the fable of the millennarians, are adverse to holy Scripture, and precipitate themselves into Judaic phantasies. The Scotch Conf. (XI) affirms that Christ sitteth at the right hand of the Father, inaugurate in his kingdom, till all his enemies be made his footstool, as undoubtedly they shall be at the final judgment, when he shall

visibly return, as that he was seen to ascend. The Belgic Conf. (XXXVII) proclaims its belief that according to the Word of God, at the time appointed, our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven corporeally and visibly, as he ascended with great glory and majesty, to declare himself Judge of the quick and the dead—burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it :—and then all men will appear personally before this great Judge, both men and women and children, from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, being summoned by the voice of the archangel and by the sound of the trumpet of God. This Conf. proceeds to describe further the manner and form of the general judgment, and the eternal issues that shall follow it to both the wicked and the righteous. With these comprehensive declarations it may safely be said that all of the subsequent creeds of the sixteenth century, British as well as Continental, so far as they contained eschatological matter, were in substantial agreement.

Following chronologically this prolonged series of creeds, yet still within the range of their immediate influence, the Westminster Symbols incorporate afresh their almost unanimous teaching on these grave topics, but with a degree of distinctness and emphasis before unattained. They agree entirely both with the affirmations of the ancient symbolism, and with the more extended teaching of both the continental and the antecedent British creeds. More full, more exact, and more practical, their very form indicates both the historic sources from which they sprang, and also the matured condition of the Protestant mind in Great Britain as well as on the Continent, with respect to the solemn doctrines presented. Simple and direct in diction, comprehensive and unequivocal in their statements, incorporating with happy skill the clearest utterances of the inspired Word, they may be said to present in one view the best thoughts of Protestantism on these topics from the time of Luther and Calvin, down to the middle of the seventeenth century.

2. Westminster Eschatology: general statement: the Millennium.

Turning to consider more specifically the eschatology of the Symbols, we may first note their answer to the interesting question respecting the future of the earth and of humanity on earth, the final triumph of the Gospel throughout the world, and the ascendancy of Jesus Christ over the human race. Respecting the earth itself as a material structure, they follow—if we may judge from their biblical quotations—the general belief of earlier Christendom in the ultimate combustion of the world, together with all its contents,

at the close of the career of our race on its surface. That belief undoubtedly had its origin in certain biblical suggestions, especially in the teaching of Christ and in some apostolic letters. Nor is this, though it is sometimes ridiculed by unbelief as a gross fancy, an unreasonable anticipation. Van Oosterzee (Christ. Dogmatics) suggests that there are natural forces enough, present in the bowels of the earth, to bring about such a result; and affirms that the belief that God will at some time set these forces free in order to consume and purify the planet, has solid warrant in the word of prophets and apostles. Fixed and immutable as nature with its laws and forces is seen at present to be, it is still a scientific hypothesis, quite in harmony with the weird imagery of Holy Writ, that the material earth is itself passing through a cosmic process—a process which in its silent progression through the ages may result in such change as will render the world uninhabitable to man, and possibly transform it finally into a flaming planet blazing with strange glories, or a consumed and dead orb hidden away somewhere in the great night of space. This is not inconsistent with the other suggestion of Scripture that, as man rises under the nurture of grace to the perfection of the millennial state, the earth itself, now groaning and travailing as if in pain on account of human sin, will assume a corresponding physical improvement, becoming once more graciously subject to man—its very deserts blossoming responsively into roses in his holy presence. The latter will be a beneficent provision in the interest of the millennial age: the former may be a sovereign and judicial procedure,—He who created the earth for man burning it out of existence when it has fully subserved its purpose for humanity.

But all this is very incidental to the question respecting the race of beings, intelligent and immortal, who now constitute the inhabitants of this physical world. Various theories are current as to the future career of humanity on the earth:—the theory of an unending round of evolution and decay, of rising and falling civilizations, of progress followed by decline and return to primitive conditions perpetually;—the theory of advancement slowly secured through the victories of man over nature, and the development of the capabilities and energies of the race, until at length a material millennium, wrought out by man for himself apart from any supernatural agencies, shall bless the world:—the theory that no such advance or even any stationary condition is possible, but rather that our humanity is slowly perishing like a decaying tree whose season of fruitage is already past, whose leaves are even now

withering, and whose predestined end is a catastrophe from which there will be no possible restoration. In contrast with all such theories, it is the clear and cheering prophecy of Scripture that the race is neither to perish nor to live on perpetually without essential improvement, nor even to advance toward maturity through the agency of physical, mental, social forces resident in the bosom of humanity,—but is rather to come to its maturing through the instrumentality of supernatural powers flowing into our human nature in such ways as to arrest its corrupting sinfulness, convert its disposition and aims, transform it into a diviner manliness, and so bring it out and up to some worthy consummation. In other words, it is the teaching of Scripture that by the Word of God preached and believed, the Christ of God accepted and enthroned in the soul, the Spirit of God energizing and purifying the moral nature, the Church of God standing out in human society as a great supernatural organism by its peculiar agencies disciplining the race for a grand future;—thus and not otherwise the career of humanity is to come to its predestined transfiguration. And by actual experiment in this direction thus far, two things seem already well assured: first, that spiritual Christianity is inherently able to work out this cosmic miracle of healing; and secondly, that no other agency now known to man can produce any such result. So far as we can judge from either Scripture or experience, the alternative of the race must lie between such Christian progress and development and some remediless failure and decay.

It is a fact of deep significance that the Christian Church through all the ages, and never more strongly than now, has been animated by an unswerving conviction that such a grand future is yet to come to our race, and that this result is to be secured through the Gospel, and the tributary agencies which are working together in its advancement. The expectation of such a millennium, to be brought about by human powers or devices apart from vital Christianity, is held by no intelligent Christian. Nor does the kindred expectation that God will finally introduce some new instrumentalities, as if this Gospel were proving itself a failure—some displays of majestic and subduing power, able to crush out the sin which the Gospel could not eradicate—find more than slight and occasional acceptance within the church. The grounds on which the Christian hope is based can only be stated here without expansion or argument. They are, first, the abundant and significant promises of both the Old and the New Testaments, given in a wide variety of forms, and under very diverse

conditions, yet in full harmony with each other, and together concentrating their radiance upon such a future age of spiritual triumph as has just been sketched. Secondly: the hope of such a future is justified by what we know of the intrinsic energies of the revealed truths of Scripture, and of their ability to convince the reason, to affect the conscience, and to stir the human will into holier aspirations and holier living. Thirdly: it is justified further by the pledge of the Holy Spirit who comes specifically to convince the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment in conjunction with such truth, and whose potent influences are able not only to convince, but also to convict and subdue even the hardest heart, and to bring even the entire race into loving obedience to Christ. Fourthly: the Christian Church must be recognized as a vast and effective agency, divinely endowed and working toward the same end,—by its teachings and creeds, its sacraments and ordinances and organized activities, and through the godly living of its membership, ever striving and growing toward such millennial perfection and splendor. Fifthly: so far as the great plan of God in providence can now be discerned, we find abundant evidence that divine providences are more and more clearly revealing their subordinate relation to the superior economy of grace, and are working more and more directly in the interest of the salvation of the entire race. And sixthly: there is much in human experience, and especially in the experience of Christians, which justifies their anticipation, not that the religion they have embraced will finally come to naught, or at best work out only some partial and insufficient results in the heart and life of humanity, but rather that what Revelation foretells will yet actually come to pass in its fullness—the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ: Edwards, Work of Redemption.

While Scripture and experience abundantly justify the faith of the Church that Christianity will finally evenuate in such a glorious issue, it is to be carefully noted that they furnish no clue to the time when this age of holiness and peace shall begin. All attempts arithmetical or otherwise to determine such a date have failed and must always fail; on this point the sacred Oracles are silent. Yet we may note their frequent suggestions respecting three events which must take place before the coming of such an age, and whose occurrence will be the clear precursor of the great consummation. The first of these is the conversion of the Jewish people, and the restoration of their relationship as a race to the Messiah and to his Gospel,—involving not so much their return to

Palestine or their organization again in any national form, but their spiritual enlightenment respecting the mission and claims of Christ, and their cordial submission to him as the true and only Redeemer of men. The second of these precurrent events is the final overthrow of Antichrist, or of all antichristian powers or influences whether personal or general, social or political or religious in their nature or pretensions, and the visible supremacy of the Gospel among men as the true and only religion for the race. The third is the universal spread of that religion through the divine and the human agencies now employed in its implantation and diffusion in the earth, until it shall be literally true, not merely that the human race shall have heard the story of Christ testified unto by his church, but shall have received that story and believed on him whom God has sent to be the Savior of the world. It is impracticable here to quote the biblical assurances that these three events are actually to occur, or that their occurrence will be the clear sign of a millennial era just dawning upon the earth : but the careful student of Holy Writ will not fail to be convinced either of their future transpiring or of their precursive or anticipatory relations. That a millennial age cannot occur before these events is evident, since they are each and all conditions essential to such an issue : that such an age is not now near at hand, however ardently desired or labored for by the church, is also evident to any one who sees how far off these anticipatory events apparently are.

On the other hand, there are three events which are plainly revealed in Scripture as occurring only after this millenial age shall have first been experienced by the world in all its sublime fullness. The first of these is the resurrection of the dead. The biblical passages sometimes quoted in support of the opinion that there are to be two resurrections, one preceding and the other following this millennial era, are offset decisively by the numerous and unquestionable declarations that there will be but one such resurrection,—a resurrection in which human beings of all types of character are to be alike included, and which is to occur at the end of the world, and in immediate conjunction with the final judgment. The second of these events is the final judgment itself, as distinguished from the notion of two judgments taking place respectively at the beginning and close of the millennial era, and also from the conception of a continuous judgment carried on progressively throughout that era. Against both of these hypotheses, though they be dimly suggested by some biblical references, the main current of Scripture teaching is

entirely decisive. The third event which is to occur, not prior to this age of Gospel triumph but at its close, is that second advent of Christ unto judgment which is so plainly set forth in the Bible as the final step in the great process of human probation. There is certainly no clear biblical proof in favor of the counter hypothesis of two such advents,—the first in order to establish the kingdom of our Lord in visible and material supremacy over all other kingdoms whether of men or of Satan,—the other for the purpose of final adjudication only. Summarizing what has been said,—just as from the nature of the case there must occur the three events named, the conversion of the Jews, the overthrow of all antichrists and the effectual calling of the Gentile races, before there can be a truly millennial era on earth, so these three solemn events, the general resurrection of the dead, the general judgment of mankind, and the glorious advent of Christ as Judge of the race, are all to occur, not before or during but at the close of that culminating era in the earthly career of humanity.

That the future age here contemplated will be a period of triumph for the Christian faith, of great glory to the Church, of peace and prosperity among the nations, of virtue and holiness and brotherhood in human society, and of wonderful development among Christians in all that pertains to personal religion and to those graces of character that exist in the truly sanctified soul, will be abundantly apparent. All that has yet appeared in human history or human experience will then be seen to be but the early dawnings of that more holy, more beautiful, more splendid age. The question respecting the duration of this millennial era is one of absorbing interest. The thousand years named in the Apocalypse are not to be interpreted as exact chronologically: the phrase obviously indicates a period which has a definite beginning and close, and which compared with ordinary events is one of vast extent—a period which may continue through tens of thousands of our calendar years. Edwards, in his remarkable plea for Union in Prayer for the early coming of this millennial era, enters into a very suggestive calculation as to the probable number of inhabitants on the earth, and especially the probable number of Christians during this period, particularly if it be thus prolonged; and concludes that there will be, at a very moderate estimate, an hundred thousand times as many souls redeemed by Christ during the millennium as will have been thus redeemed from the beginning of the world to that time. His calculation has a large moral and spiritual, if not an exact arith-

metical basis. There is good reason to hope and believe that at the end of this era the number of the saved will be immeasurably greater than the number of all that have been or shall be lost among the sons of men. And it may well be anticipated that in the glorious light shed by this millennial age on the entire administration of God over the race, much that now seems dark in his providence—much that now perplexes us as we study the slow evolutions of his grace—much that now oppresses us as we think of the countless millions of mankind who have never heard the Gospel or are now in ignorance of it or rejecting it, will be fully and gloriously explained.

With this general summary, the Symbols as we shall see on close inspection are in full accord. They contain no trace of sympathy with the materialistic notions which the earlier Confessions condemned in such vigorous terms, respecting a coming of Christ upon earth before the resurrection, and his residence among men for a prolonged period, in order to establish a temporal kingdom marked by displays of imperial splendor and by supernatural exhibitions of energy, before which his enemies whom the Gospel cannot reach, are to be prostrated and utterly overthrown. Nor do they ever suggest some prolonged era of judgment, or a special resurrection of some specified portion of mankind, or any other of the hypotheses now current in premillenarian circles. They affirm rather that the present kingdom of Christ among men, the kingdom of grace, is to be developed more and more until it shall become a spiritual millennium; and that the dominion of Christ over humanity is to be a growing dominion of truth and love and holiness in the souls of men and in the heart of human society, until at last the whole earth shall become submissive to his spiritual sway. They teach that the power of Satan over mankind, the domination of evil in organized and malevolent form in the world, Antichrist of whatever type, is but temporary, and is in the coming ages to be overthrown in the only way possible—the implantation of Christianity and the cosmic development of the Christian Church, not merely in grace and experience, but also in influence and control throughout the earth. They do not indeed answer all the specific questions which have since their era excited the interest of the church,—doubtless for the reason that eschatological doctrine held no conspicuous place in the deliberations or controversies of that period. Yet their general teaching is remarkably clear and convincing, and their statements—as has already been said—comprise the fullest exposition of the Protestant belief up to their time. And it certainly is a strong testimony

to the intellectual wisdom and spiritual insight of their framers, that these old Symbols contain for the most part not only the clearest doctrine, but also the best antidote to much of the heresy in this later age when unhistoric speculation is so rife, and the minds of many are so much confused or misled as to the real truth of God.

3. Westminster Eschatology: particular declarations.

It may be well to confirm this general claim by a more specific study of the Symbols in detail. It is said at the beginning of the Confession (I : i) that the Holy Scriptures have been prepared for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the malice of Satan and of the world : and that they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation, in order that the divine Word may dwell plentifully in all. It is said (V : vii) that the providence of God after a most special manner taketh care of his church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof. It is said (VII : vi), that the covenant of grace, or offer of life and salvation to sinners through Christ is, although with more simplicity and less outward glory than in the Hebraic dispensation, held forth under the Gospel in more fullness, evidence and spiritual efficacy to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles. It is said (VIII) that God hath put all power into the hand of Christ as our Mediator ; that in this capacity he is to bruise the head of the serpent of evil ; that by his almighty power and wisdom he will in his own manner and way overcome all the enemies of his people ; and will, after sitting at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for the saints, return at the end of the world to be the judge of men and angels.

In the Larger Catechism (53–4) it is added that, acting thus as Mediator, Christ gave his apostles commission to preach the Gospel to all nations,—that he ascended into the highest heavens there to receive gifts for men,—that in his ascended state he has all fullness of joy, glory and power over all things in heaven and earth, and doth both gather and defend his church and subdue all its enemies. It is said (XXI : iv) that prayer is to be made for all things lawful, and for all sorts of men living, or shall live hereafter : which is specialized in the Larger Cat. (183–4) as including all things tending to the glory of God and the welfare of the whole church of Christ on the earth. In the subsequent exposition of the prayer taught us by Christ, we are still more particularly instructed to pray that God would prevent and remove all atheism, ignorance, idolatry, and by his overruling

providence direct and dispose all things to his own glory: specifically that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed,—that the Gospel may be propagated throughout the world,—that the Jews may be called, and the fullness of the Gentiles brought in,—that the church may be furnished with all that is essential to the discharge of her great commission to convert and save men,—that Christ would hasten the time of his second coming and our reigning with him forever,—and finally that he would be pleased so to exercise the kingdom of his power, or his gracious sovereignty, in all the world as may best conduce to these ends. And in the original Directory for Worship ministers are enjoined specifically to pray for the propagation of the Gospel and kingdom of Christ to all nations, for the conversion of the Jews, for the fullness of the Gentiles, for the fall of Antichrist, and for the hastening of the second coming of our Lord: Minutes, 387.

It will be seen that the three events just named as antecedent and essential conditions to the establishment of Christianity in the millennial form, are here specified as objects of supplication, and that the propagation of the Gospel as a saving message among all nations was directly contemplated by the Westminster divines as a matter of hope and of holy desire. It may, however, be admitted that their strict doctrine of election and predestination stood in the way of their full dogmatic apprehension of the objects for which they themselves prayed, and enjoined the ministry and the churches under their care continually to pray. Holding as many of them did to the doctrine of Calvin, that God has determined in himself what he would have to become of every individual of mankind, and that eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others, even from eternity, they could not well rise in their theology up to the high level of their prayers, and their prayers in turn were doubtless limited in sweep and fervency by the restrictions imposed by their theological belief. Yet it is obvious that they were in fact among the foremost representatives in their day of a large and free Gospel, able in its provisions to supply the needs of the world. It is also a precious fact that later Presbyterianism has attained to still broader conceptions, and is animated by a still larger hope concerning that Gospel and its adaptations to the spiritual necessities of all men, whether in nominally Christian or in pagan lands. The United Presbyterian Church of Scotland has well expressed this better view in its clear declaration that the doctrine of the divine decrees, including the doctrine of election to eternal life, is to be held in connection and harmony with the truth that God is not

willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, and that he has provided a salvation sufficient for all, adapted to all, and offered to all in the Gospel. Statements no less emphatic appear in the Declaration of the Free Church of Scotland, and in the Articles of the English Synod.

American Presbyterianism, at least in this age, has with comparatively small exception planted itself on this broader conception. Its Directory, although abbreviated from the original, inculcates no less fully the duty of public intercession for others, including the whole world of mankind, for the kingdom of Christ or his church universal, and for the interests of human society in general. The chapter recently inserted in it calls upon all Christians by their gifts to promote the preaching of the Gospel in all the world and to every creature, according to the command of Christ. The chapter on the Gospel, proposed in the Revision, which doubtless represents the belief of a large majority of the Church, declares expressly that God has provided a way of life and salvation sufficient for and adapted to the whole lost race of man; that this way of salvation promises eternal life to all who truly repent and believe, and invites all to accept the offered mercy; that Christ has commissioned his church to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations; and that all believers are therefore bound to contribute by their prayers, gifts and personal efforts to the extension of the kingdom of Christ throughout the world. The chapter on the Holy Spirit, proposed in the same Revision, also represents the larger view in the declaration that the Spirit is everywhere present among men, preparing the way for the Gospel; that he accompanies the Gospel with his persuasive energies and urges its message upon the reason and the conscience; that he gives efficacy to the Word and the ordinances, and calls and endows all ministers for their holy office; and finally that by him the church will be preserved, increased and purified, until it shall cover the earth. Another proof may be added to these unofficial declarations in the fact that in its vast missionary enterprises, domestic and foreign, American Presbyterianism has acted steadily—not on the theory that the mere task of testifying to the nations concerning Christ and his grace is sufficient, and that the number of the elect, called from among the nations, may even now be complete, and Christ may accordingly come at any time and set up an imperial throne among men, the work of the Gospel and the church being ended,—but rather on the broader belief that the Jewish people are to be converted, the Gentile races brought into the fold, Antichrist finally

overcome by Christian agencies, and the Gospel of grace everywhere triumphant among men.*

4. Physical Death, its theological significance; Creed statements.

Turning from this interesting branch of eschatological doctrine, we may next note the teaching of the Westminster divines respecting the article of Death, viewed in its theological aspects and relations. The term, death, is often used in the Symbols as in the Scriptures to describe deadness in sin, that corruption of the spiritual nature which is said to be conveyed through Adam to all his posterity, and which has its counterpart in the intense phrase, defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. But we contemplate here only physical death, which is represented as coming into the world as a direct punitive result of human sin. Man is made subject to death in this physical sense in consequence, first, of his original sin with its corruption of the moral nature, and then of that actual transgression which specially binds him over to the curse of the law and the wrath of God. Physical death is directly enumerated (L. C., 28, 84 ; S. C., 19) among the punishments of sin in this world, and as the appointed wages or outcome of personal transgression. The Symbols make no reference to the

*So far as the language of reports adopted by the General Assembly may be quoted as authoritative illustrations of the accredited faith of the living Church, the following quotation from the report of the Committee on Foreign Missions to the Assembly of 1878 furnishes an interesting confirmation of the view here presented :

The Presbyterian Church in this country has planted itself from the beginning on the clear and broad doctrine of Scripture, that this world is yet to be converted to Christ, and that the forces already brought into requisition in the divine economy are all that are needful to the securing of that grand result. The Presbyterian Church believes, that in his written Word God has revealed all the truth that is essential to the enlightenment and salvation of our humanity. The Presbyterian Church believes that the Spirit of God is potent enough and gracious enough to justify the largest anticipations in respect to the regeneration of mankind. The Presbyterian Church believes that the living Church, as established by Christ, contains within itself, under the divine guidance and quickening, all the agencies and resources requisite to the evangelization of the whole earth. And on these cardinal verities of Scripture the Presbyterian Church, discouraged by no outward obstacles, daunted by no burdens, now and always plants itself in this great missionary work ; by these it justifies the offering up of its means and the sacrifice of its beloved sons and daughters on this altar : in them it hopes and acts and prays, and in them it will ever hope and act and pray, for the coming of a kingdom that shall be righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost, and that shall increase and extend until it has filled the earth.

fact that the vegetable and animal worlds, so far as they existed prior to the creation of man, were subject to a law of material decay analogous to physical death in him. The more natural interpretation of their teaching is that man, had he remained sinless, would have been lifted above the range of this general law of decay, and so would have existed on the earth from age to age without any wasting of his native powers, and without the dark experience of death. Yet it is not inconsistent with their teaching to hold that, though death would have come in the course of time upon his bodily organism, as upon all other material organisms, such death would have been only a serene and happy translation, void of all painful elements, from these earthly to some celestial scenes.

Certainly death as we now behold it, with all the elements and concomitants that make it so solemn and so dreadful an event, has been utilized by God as the sign and emblem of his feeling towards sin, and of his purpose to punish the sinner. As such it has come upon the entire race, and remains as an inexorable decree through all the generations. We have here a most impressive illustration of the organic unity of the race, and of that solemn law of representation, according to which, under the divine constitution of things, the effects of action flow down from the actor upon others, even from generation to generation. Even infants and imbecile persons who have never sinned personally, are represented as amenable to this dread law, passing under the universal condemnation in consequence of their sharing in the Adamic taint, and therefore capable of being saved only through Christ, and by the gracious ministrations of the Holy Spirit alone. Though the Symbols say but little about the heathen world, yet their clear implication is that the heathen, old and young, die because they also are sinful in the sight of God, and are included by him in his comprehensive judgment upon the race. So far as his solemn mandate as to death is concerned, no distinction is found to exist between Jew and Gentile, between the dweller in Christian lands and the pagan. In the case of those who are living under the clear light of Revelation, and who yet refuse to obey the divine commands or to accept the grace offered to them in Christ, death has a peculiarly solemn significance. It is not alone the fact that they belong to a sinful race and are by nature exposed to its stroke: God solemnly testifies in this way to what they have personally done as being evil in his sight, and in inflicting physical death upon them gives assurance also of that further punishment which their personal sin has justly incurred.

In the case of Christians, physical death is not to be viewed as penal, though it may assume the aspect of chastisement or perhaps the aspect of disciplinary culture. Christ has pardoned the believer and redeemed him in this sense from the curse of violated law. But he may still need divine correction or divine chastisement while in his earthly condition, and death itself may have for him some disciplinary or perchance retributive mission. God does not save even the saint from the action of the universal law; or even from as severe and dreadful pangs in death as befall the greatest unbeliever. But we are taught that he does so far change the nature of death in the case of the righteous, that they are (L. C., 85) delivered from the sting and curse of it; and that, though they must die as men, the event has its source and explanation, not so much in the wrath of God as in his love, to free them perfectly and forever from sin and misery, and to make them capable of further and better communion with Christ in glory. To the saint, therefore, the event becomes not a curse, but rather a precious, crowning benediction—a divine decree, having in it the twofold object just stated, and being therefore a final seal of the blessed covenant into which he has, through Christ, been permitted to enter with God.

The doctrine of the Confession and Catechisms on this subject is the general doctrine of the Protestant creeds, and the universal belief of evangelical Protestantism in our time. It is true that comparatively little is said in these formularies respecting physical as distinguished from spiritual and eternal death: it was on the latter that stress was naturally laid, as a sequence from the strong and solemn doctrine held by the Reformers almost universally touching sin and its moral issues. The Belgic Conf. (XIV) states their general view in the proposition that man, being by creation in honor understood it not, neither knew his excellency, but willfully subjected himself to sin, and consequently to death and the curse; and that by sin he separated himself from God who was his true life, having corrupted his whole nature, whereby he made himself liable to corporeal and spiritual death. The Scotch Conf. teaches that Christ by rising again for our justification has destroyed him who was the author of death, and has brought life again to us who were subject to death and to the bondage of the same; and the Irish Articles declare in biblical phrase that death went over all men forasmuch as all have sinned. Respecting the righteous, the Heidelberg Cat. affirms (42) that death is not a satisfaction for their sin, but only a dying unto sins and entering into eternal life. It is noticeable that the Council of Trent maintains

substantially the same doctrine as these Protestant formularies, affirming that through his offense Adam incurred the wrath of God, and consequently death, with which God had previously threatened him; and that he, being defiled by that sin of disobedience, has transfused death and the pains of the body into the whole human race.

Such is plainly the generic doctrine of Scripture on this solemn theme; nor can those who believe in its teachings as conclusive accept any other, and least of all any merely naturalistic explanations or hypotheses on a matter so vital. We cannot rest in the rationalistic conception that physical death in man is nothing more or less than the application to him of a law which is stamped upon the system of nature everywhere, and from which it is, therefore, as impossible for him to escape as it would be to raise himself by mere volition or by physical endeavor above the atmosphere that surrounds the earth. Nor can we accept the cold dogma of speculative science, which excludes God and his will from this dark experience of man, and refers the experience to the mere action of impersonal and inexorable forces. Neither can we shut out the doctrine of an individualizing or particularistic action of Providence in determining for every human being the time, the manner, the condition of his transition through this narrow gateway into the life beyond. Nor can we consent to dissociate death and sin, or to deny that the latter is in some true and deep sense the cause of the former; death having passed upon all men, as we are assured, for that all have sinned. Evangelical Protestants can hold no other belief than that, at least in its present painful form, death is the divinely ordained outgrowth of transgression—an outgrowth so broad and so effectual that not adult transgressors in Christian lands alone, but even the heathen in their low blindness and corruption cannot escape it; an outgrowth that reaches even infants in its wide sweep, and from which even the holiest disciple is not exempt, since he also is of mortal parentage, though for him the nature of death is graciously changed, and its gateway becomes to him the wide door to a purity that is complete, and a blessedness that is everlasting.

5. Immortality: evidences natural and biblical: Westminster teaching: other creeds.

Associated with this thoroughly biblical view of death stands the confessional doctrine of Immortality as an original endowment of the soul in man. The question whether there is for man a life beyond the present into which death will immediately introduce him, and the further question whether that life will be temporary

like our present existence or unending and eternal, have interested thoughtful minds in all lands and ages. Apart from the conception of such a future life, religion in its natural varieties, and eminently in its Christian form, would be—as has well been said—an arch resting on one pillar, a bridge ending in an abyss. Philosophy, especially ethical philosophy, apart from this conception not only loses one of its chief charms, but misses one of its most substantial supports. Hence Socrates earnestly argues for immortality in the Phaedo and elsewhere, maintaining that the soul, being the immaterial part of man and far superior to the body, cannot possibly, when separated from the body, be dissipated into nothingness. Cicero discourses eloquently, De Immortalitate, on the foundations of the universal hope that man shall survive the dissolution of his bodily organization. And in all subsequent ages thoughtful men, both pagan and Christian, have brooded over the answer which nature and reason combine to give to the old query of Job whether if a man die, he shall live again and live forever.

The speculative arguments for such futurity and immortality of existence may be briefly stated. They lie partly in the conception of the soul itself as being, so far as it can be discerned in consciousness, a simple and uncompounded essence which such an event as death cannot possibly destroy,—mere change of form or activity, however radical, involving no necessary change in substance. They are found partly in the natural experiences of the soul, such as that law or principle of vital continuity, and also of conscious supremacy, which belongs essentially to our personality, and which survives within us through all the changes and diversities of the present life. Kindred evidence is derived from the obvious survival of mental and moral powers in undiminished vigor, even while the body is just sinking into decay. The sense of responsibility also, and the witness of conscience, and the anticipation of award or retribution not merely in this life but hereafter, are rightly adduced in further confirmation. The instinctive yearnings of the soul, its innate aspirations after knowedge, its irrepressible desire to live, its visions of future activity and future fellowship, greatly increase the force of such natural argument. The teleological reasonings based on the divine purpose and the divine goodness in the present creation, preservation, equipment and discipline of man, point strongly toward some other and higher life than the present: and the moral constitution of the race as a race, taken in conjunction with the moral government evidently administered now over the race in ways which

constantly suggest futurition, certainly confirms that conclusion. It is also argued that the perfection of human society, which like the perfection of the individual man is clearly unattainable in this present state of being, furnishes a strong presumption in favor of the belief that such a perfected condition for society as well as for man individually will be attained hereafter. The argument of Cicero from the consensus of human belief in immortality in various countries and ages may well be added to the list of such reasonings. There are also some analogies in physical nature, such as the apparent permanence of life in the midst of continuous mutations and convulsions, which make some illustrative contribution to the speculative argument.

It is to be admitted, however, that shadows of doubt rest more or less heavily on all such reasonings, even in the minds of those who present them,—as Cicero confessed after reading the Phaedo. The proposition that the soul is simple rather than compound cannot be positively established, nor does the existence of human desires or aspirations prove conclusively that such desires or aspirations will be gratified,—since many right and good wishes in this life bear no fruitage. If mental and moral powers in some cases survive while the process of physical decay is going on, there are other instances in which consciousness is lost, the sense of personality fades away, and all the higher powers seem to be engulfed in the wreck which dashes to pieces the bodily organism. Inasmuch as justice seems not to be secured always in this life, it must be admitted speculatively that justice may sometimes fail hereafter, and that it is possible that the sinner may escape the consequences of his sin in the future—as he sometimes seems to escape them here. The argument from consensus of belief cannot be viewed as conclusive, since a contrary consensus, or at least doubt, and in many cases indifference as to a coming life, exist widely among men. All analogies drawn from the field of physical existence are at best but illustrative, and cannot justify a positive conclusion. And after all, the objector may say with some force that all the reasonings in favor of the doctrine can create nothing more than a presumption of its truth,—a presumption which leaves room for reasonable and serious questioning on the whole matter.

In view of such doubts and questionings, we must turn to the Bible if anywhere for really decisive proof. Here all doubts are solved—all unbelief is divinely answered. The doctrine of immortality as an original endowment of the soul is indeed one of the fundamental elements of Christianity. It is based immediately

on the teachings of Scripture, and especially of the New Testament, and centrally on the words of Him whose mission it was to bring life and immortality to light. Whatever may be said respecting the inevitable incompleteness of the great argument from nature, there can be no question concerning the truth in the minds of any who have once recognized and received Jesus Christ as their teacher concerning eternal things. The Old Testament contains a variety of evidences which indicate that the doctrine of future if not of perpetual existence was divinely made known to the Hebrew race, and was accepted among them as an unquestionable article of belief. Although most of the divine stimulants brought to bear upon them in restraining from sin and inciting to virtue and godliness, were drawn from the present life, there is much more than recent criticism admits, to show that the incentives drawn from a life to come did reach and powerfully control them both as individuals and as a people. But the testimony of Christ as to both futurity of existence and perpetuity of existence is clear and decisive: more than all other teachers, Gentile or Hebrew, he brought life and immortality to light in conjunction with his Gospel, and used the revelation as a mighty incentive both to faith and to holy living. At one time he declares that all the righteous who are joined to him as his disciples shall live forever: at another he solemnly affirms that the wicked shall not be blotted out of being but shall have an eternal existence: at another he announces that all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth to an eternity of life, either blessed or retributive. His own resurrection is itself a conclusive proof of the general doctrine: death cannot mean annihilation since he actually lived after dying, and thereby proved that in him we may live also. His apostles took up his teaching and unswervingly repeated and emphasized it, as if the doctrine were past all possibility of challenge. It is impracticable to introduce specific illustrations here: all will admit that whether its testimony be true or false, the Bible is as clear and decisive on this doctrine as language can make it. A plain and solemn alternative thus confronts us. If that testimony be true, then the beliefs and the hopes of the soul are resting on impregnable foundations: if it be false, then nothing remains but either such probable conjectures as nature and reason may supply, or the impenetrable shadows of intellectual and moral despair.

On these biblical grounds, the doctrine was incorporated in the first of the Christian creeds in the concluding phrase, the Life Everlasting. We see it also in the vitam venturi seculi of the

Nicene, and the vitam æternam and ignem æternum of the Athanasian symbol. The confessions of the Reformation may be said universally to affirm the doctrine, though for the most part in the form of general allusion rather than direct statement. It is assumed, as in the passages already quoted from the Augsburg and Belgic Confessions, wherever the associated doctrine of the Judgment is introduced. The First Helvetic expressly declares that man was made in the perfect image of God spiritually, but was composed of two parts, body and spirit, of which the first was mortal and the second immortal, according to the divine arrangement. The Heidelberg Catechism asserts the doctrine of immortal existence for both the righteous and the wicked in its terse statement that God created man good, and after his own image, that he might rightly know God his Creator, heartily love him, and live with him in eternal blessedness. Then it adds that his justice requires that sin, which is committed against the most high majesty of God, be also punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment. The Roman and the Greek creeds also teach the doctrine, at least by implication, as in their injunctions respecting the offering of prayers and the giving of alms for the benefit of the dead.

Immortality is asserted in the Westminster Symbols in various ways. It is clearly implied in the description of the nature of man at his creation, as a being made in the image of God. It is directly taught elsewhere, as in the phrase, *having an immortal subsistence*, and in the associated declaration as to the resurrection of the body and its subsequent union with the soul forever. It is also taught in the statement concerning the issues of the final judgment: the righteous, it is said, going into an everlasting life, and there receiving the fullness of joy and refreshing that shall come from the presence of the Lord for evermore; while the wicked who know not God, and obey not the Gospel, are said to be cast into eternal torments, and to be punished with an everlasting destruction: L. C., 89, 90; S. C., 19. Such passages show beyond question that the writers of the Symbols regarded man as having an immortal subsistence, not as a gift of grace, but as a constitutional endowment distinguishing him from all other earthly creatures, and allying him in nature and essence with God forever. They do not, indeed, suggest any of those interesting considerations by which men have endeavored to prove the fact of human immortality from the light and teachings of nature. But their appeal to the Word of God is very distinct and conclusive, and the fact that they rather assume the doctrine

than undertake to set it forth in logical form, is itself a strong evidence as to their belief.

6. Conditional Immortality: Annihilationism.

At this point we are confronted by the counter hypothesis of an immortality not inherent but conditioned upon character—the dogma of annihilationism. This dogma, somewhat current in more recent times, and in some aspects specially injurious to faith, affirms in general that immortality, or endlessness of existence, is the peculiar heritage of the righteous, communicated by the Holy Spirit through grace, as the final reward of their faith and obedience; and that the souls of the unholy perish judicially as their bodies perish, either at death, or after some assigned period of penalty, or at the last judgment. The doctrine that endless existence is an original endowment of the soul is thus set aside, and immortality is made a conditional and also a gracious experience. The arguments urged in favor of this belief are derived from various sources, natural and biblical. It is claimed in general that the strong language of the Bible respecting the destruction of the wicked, their being swept away before the whirlwind of divine vengeance, their being cast off into outer darkness and there lost forever, justifies this conclusion; and further, that on many grounds it is more consonant with what we know of the character of God and of his administration over men, and with the essential equities of the case, to believe that he will finally annihilate the wicked rather than preserve them in an unending estate of misery.

More specifically, it is maintained that there is no positive warrant in nature for the affirmation that the soul whether material or immaterial is intrinsically immortal: it may live for a period more or less prolonged after death, and yet become ultimately altogether unconscious of existence. It is said that the soul must depend for its immortality and for the continuance of its consciousness on the upholding power of God, and that he may at his option and for adequate reason at any time withdraw that sustaining power, and suffer the sinful soul to drop into oblivion. It is also held that sin is a disorder of such nature that, having no permanent ground of existence in itself, it may finally destroy the soul that is possessed by it, and may thus itself become extinct. It is urged that the penalty of sin is not positive infliction of suffering but rather the privation of good, and that the extreme of penalty is to make such privation absolute and endless. It is argued that the goodness and mercy of God will constrain him finally by some beneficent process to blot out forever those

whom he finds to be incorrigibly sinful. It is further argued that the welfare and the final triumph and glory of the divine government would be enhanced even by the judicial destruction eternally of those who oppose it. It is also maintained that this hypothesis relieves us from the dark alternative of eternal sin and eternal damnation. And finally it is held that immortality and fullness of life would thus be seen to be the proper reward of the good through divine grace, and would continue to be their reward and their joy forevermore. It is admitted by some advocates that some degree of future penalty may be requisite to vindicate the divine government and character, and that consequently such annihilation may not occur at death or in any brief period thereafter, but may be deferred even until the general judgment when, as one part of that transcendent event, the wicked may one and all be swept out of existence forever. Certain passages of Scripture, from both the Old Testament and the New, in some instances suggesting utter death and destruction to the evil and in others pledging glory and honor and an immortality of blessedness to the holy, are quoted in support of these more general considerations: White, Life in Christ.

It might be urged as a sufficient reply to the biblical argument, that the deep silence of Scripture as to such an event as is thus described, must of itself be conclusive. If the wicked were all to be destroyed at the final judgement, for example, it is reasonable to expect that in the repeated and specific and intensely real descriptions of that great transaction, there would be some hint of an immortality that hinged upon its solemn testing. But further: there is certainly no adequate ground for interpreting such biblical terms as destruction and death, and such startling metaphors as are sometimes found in the Bible, as if they signified the actual cessation of conscious existence; since it is obvious that such language often refers, as in the instance of the destruction of Jerusalem, to a state of failure or loss or desolation which is not final or irremediable: Plumptre, Spirits in Prison. In reply to the more general argumentation it is sufficient to note, first, that this hypothesis is entirely at variance with the clear and positive doctrine of universal immortality suggested by so many speculative presumptions, and abundantly verified in the inspired Word: secondly, that the fact of present sin suggests the possibility of the continuance of sin, and consequently of sinners, even eternally; and in like manner, the fact of present punishment and of punishment after death, justifies the presumption that punishment, like sin, may continue forever: thirdly,

that such a catastrophe as annihilation would seem to frustrate the very purpose of God in the creation of the multitudes who are thus to be swept as worthless chaff out of being: fourthly, that this dogma involves a serious impugning of the divine government and administration, and also a dark reflection upon the divine goodness and mercy, since God is compelled at last to accept such a dreadful alternative: fifthly, that it implies a subversion of the idea of penalty, an abrogation of the solemn law of retribution, and the escape of the sinner from a doom such as his guilt deserves: and finally, that there is nothing in such a hypothesis which removes or even lightens the pain which the righteous suffer in contemplating the fact of eternal sin, followed under a law of moral necessity by eternal condemnation.*

There are no clear traces of the existence of this erroneous dogma in Protestant circles during the long period in which the Protestant creeds were receiving their form, and we therefore find in them no direct reference to it. But what they do affirm respecting the life to come and its issues, both before the general judgment and after, is entirely inconsistent with any such doctrine. They proceed invariably on the basis of the continued existence of the wicked as truly as of the righteous: they nowhere intimate that the penalties of sin are to be removed in eternity, and still less that there is a time to come when the sin and the sinner will be extinguished together. That the Symbols follow the general trend of the Protestant Confessions in excluding this error cannot be doubted, though the exclusion be implied rather than formal. Their uniform teachings respecting the general judgment, the life to come, the eternal condition of mankind, are wholly inconsistent with any other interpretation, and their biblical references are decisive. They nowhere recognize the view that death and destruction and other kindred terms in the New Testament always or even generally imply extinction of being. These terms are often used in Scipture, as we have seen, to describe varieties of loss, failure, desolation, both temporal and spiritual, which are not in their nature remediless, and which

*Edwards in his solemn discourse on the Eternity of Hell Torments argues against the theory of annihilation on the ground that a state of annihilation is not a state of suffering or of punishment,—that consciousness is an essential condition in such punishment,—that this theory nullifies the conception of degrees in penalty,—that the second death described in Scripture must be something different from the mere cessation of being,—and that there are stringent reasons in the divine administration why positive punishment should be eternal—even the goodness of God toward the moral universe as well as his justice demanding such endlessness of penalty.

fall in many instances very far short of utter annihilation. In like manner the term death, as applied in the Bible to the present condition of the sinful soul, by no means implies that the soul has perished or is to perish and be blotted out eternally, even though that condition of sin should become characteristic of it forever. And the manner in which the Westminster divines employ such terms shows beyond question that this theory had no place whatever in their convictions;—shows rather that they regarded all men as alike inherently immortal, and believed in an eternity of being for the sinful, as truly as for those who have received salvation through Christ. The fact that they sometimes used the term, immortality, as the Bible itself does, in a special sense to describe not merely endlessness of being, but also an endless and ineffable felicity of being in the immediate presence of God, in no way affects their general teaching.

7. The Intermediate Life: its general characteristics.

Holding therefore to the doctrine of an immortal life for the holy and the unholy alike, when death shall have wrought its work in the dissolution of the ties which bind body and spirit together in this mortal state, we are at once interested in the further question respecting the nature and qualities of that condition of being into which the soul is thus ushered. It is styled theologically the Intermediate State or Life, as lying between death and that remote resurrection in which the vital ties, for a time dissolved, shall be again restored in an indissoluble and eternal form. It will be obvious at once that this is a prolonged state of being, extending from the beginning of history through all the ages of the world down to the hour when the last members of the race shall, without passing through death, be changed as in a moment at the dawning of the day of judgment. It is obvious also that those who already dwell in this universe of the dead outnumber incalculably all who are now living on the earth, and that this innumerable multitude may be, probably will be, increased many fold before the end of human history. The further fact that many of our friends and associates have already entered that shadowy realm, and that within a brief period we ourselves shall become members of this vast concourse of disembodied spirits, deepens beyond all power of expression our sense of the significance of the inquiry respecting the nature and general characteristics of the Intermediate Life.

The primary question to be considered here is the question whether the soul during the period of its separation from the body

onward to the resurrection remains in a state of quiescence or torpor, or is conscious and active, having true and proper exercise of its rational and spiritual powers. The Symbols say nothing that would favor the notion of quiescence or slumber during this long interval. They directly declare (XXXII : 1) that the souls of all men neither die nor sleep after death, but do immediately return as in true consciousness to Him who gave them. They also describe in explicit terms the two estates into which these souls pass respectively at death, and their description invariably implies a conscious and active existence, whether it be one of felicity in the immediate presence of God, or of absence from him and of retributive torment. In the Smaller Catechism (37) it is explicitly taught that the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory,—a statement which is absolutely exclusive of the theory of an intermediate condition of torpor. More fully still, the righteous soul is said (L. C., 86) to be received immediately after death into the highest heavens, there to behold the face of God in light and glory, and there to wait for the redemption of its body, and for the wonderful union that shall follow. Like affirmations, though less full, are made respecting the soul that has passed under the experience of death while in a state of wickedness and unbelief. And it is added, that besides these two places or conditions, both of which are seen to involve consciousness and activity, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

These declarations will be better understood, if we call to mind the antecedent symbolism on this subject. It is well known that the dogma that the soul sleeps in entire unconsciousness during the period intermediate between death and the resurrection has found occasional advocates in both the ancient and the medieval church,—sometimes in the form here stated, sometimes in the grosser form of an absolute death of the soul in conjunction with the decease of the body, to be followed by a resurrection of both body and soul and their union again at the general judgment. It is also a familiar fact that the dogma obtained some degree of currency in Protestant circles, especially among the Anabaptists, at the very outset of the Reformation. There are expressions in the writings of Luther which would seem to imply that he at one time favored it. The first theological treatise of Calvin, De Psychopannychia, was written to confute it. The continental creeds without exception imply the contrary, though the dogma is nowhere formally stigmatized in them as heretical. The British symbols are more explicit, opposition to the heresy evidently hav-

ing grown up in Britain during the period immediately following the Reformation. The most distinct and positive declaration is that of the Scotch Confession (Art. XVII), which doubtless furnishes the key to the Westminster statements. The language of the Scotch Confession is so strong and so quaint that it deserves quotation here: The Elect departed are in peace, and rest fra their labours: Not that they sleep, and come to a certaine oblivion, as some Phantastickes do affirm: bot that they are delivered fra all feare and torment, and all temptatioun, to quhilk we and all Goddis Elect are subject in this life. . . . As contrariwise, the reprobate and unfaithfull departed haue anguish, torment and paine, that cannot be expressed. So that nouther are the ane nor the uther in sik sleep that they feel not joy or torment.

In view of certain tendencies of our time, it is important to emphasize this doctrine. The argument of Whately (Future State), from passages which speak of death as a sleep, and of the resurrection as an awakening from sleep, and also from the final judgment as being the first divine adjudication upon the character and deserts of the soul, does not satisfy his own mind, and is practically set aside in the very volume that presents it. Isaac Taylor, in his Physical Theory of Another Life, urges a similar argument, wholly speculative, based on the notion that corporeity and locality are essential to conscious activity on the part of the human soul. But the fact that God exists above locality and corporeity, and that angels, so far as we know, are as conscious and active, though disembodied, as we are in the present life, seems a sufficient answer to this argument. That the intermediate life within whose vast domain such countless millions are already dwelling, is not a long sleep but rather a conscious and an active life, may be positively affirmed. This affirmation rests primarily on the numerous and cumulative statements of both the Old Testament and the New,—specifically on the words of our Lord touching the patriarchs as still in conscious existence, his parables such as that of Dives and Lazarus, his promise to the crucified thief; and on the repeated declarations of Paul and Peter and John, and the sublime representations of the Apocalypse. Such consciousness involves the knowledge by the soul of itself as existing, and as being itself and not another. It implies the exercise of intellect and emotion and purpose, and the ability to apprehend such exercise in others. It includes not only the power to will, but the putting forth of volitions—perhaps with far wider range than was possible to the actor while in the flesh. There can be no valid objection to this suggestion, drawn from the fact

that the soul is disembodied, and is therefore without the physical media which are requisite to such exercises in the present life. Such consciousness and such activity belong of right to the conception of pure spirit as distinguished from man. Moreover, the same divine power which now enables a human soul to live and act in and through its corporeal frame, may qualify it to live and act, perhaps in much greater efficiency, when freed from such physical limitations. The speculations of Whately and Taylor are clearly invalid: a deeper philosophy certifies that the soul can be and is both conscious and active after death as before.

Further: this intermediate life is also a moral life—a condition in which conscience is as truly exercised as reason or feeling, in which the will may be set as here upon right or wrong forms of activity, and in which character is as truly exhibited and developed as amid the scenes and experiences of time. Whatever reasons there are for believing that the soul will exist in a disembodied condition, and will in that condition have all its innate powers in conscious play, constitute so many reasons for believing equally in its ethical endowment and ethical experience also. Death, whatever else it may take away, does not, cannot, disrobe the soul of character: the man in all his moral faculties and capabilities survives its shock and its strange transmutations. It follows that the intermediate life must also in the nature of the case be retributive—a life of awards or punishments which are directly consequent upon the earthly career. Without anticipating two or three questions which will arise a little later, we may simply note here the obvious fact that, as death ushers the soul into the more immediate presence of God, in full consciousness and in the exercise of all its faculties, wearing the robe of character which has been woven by it amid the experiences and tests of time, that soul must meet either the divine approval or the divine condemnation in view of what God as judge sees it in that decisive hour to be. It is also obviously the teaching of Scripture that in that solemn adjudication the character, however mutable in this life, assumes its final form,—that the moral status of the soul is then and there determined, and that the experiences which follow thereafter are in the nature either of reward or of penalty for the deeds done in the body. And it may also be suggested at this point that this biblical teaching is corroborated by the spontaneous, the intense, the solemn convictions of mankind; the righteous dying not in the expectation of sleeping in unconsciousness until the resurrection, but rather in the anticipation of immediate benediction and blessing;

the unholy dying in similar anticipation of some distinct and dread disapproval of their worldly lives, their unworthy characters before God.

It is also important to note still further, that this intermediate life is not, like the present, a condition of intermingling and companionship on the part of the righteous and the wicked, but is rather a life of separation between those two classes—a separation complete and perpetual. So far as we can conceive of place as applicable to the conception of disembodied spirit, the Scriptures sometimes present to us the thought of one vast universe in which all the dead are congregated; but more often we derive from them the impression of two such universes, as far apart from each other as are the characters of those who respectively inhabit them. The Hebrew Sheol and the Greek Hades in some instances suggest simply the grave where the dead are sleeping together, and in others the great world where the dead are congregated in consciousness, without special recognition of any division or separation based on character. Yet these, like the more specific terms, Paradise and Gehenna, not infrequently convey the added thought that the intermediate life is not a place of indiscriminate fellowship, but rather a condition of separation, provided for even by the natural repulsion between good and evil, but directly prescribed by divine ordination. It is therefore in full harmony with inspired teaching to speak of two universes rather than one—two moral conditions as widely divided as the most radical diversities in character can make them. The papal dogma of other subordinate distinctions of place, such as purgatory, the limbus patrum or the abode of the souls of the devout who died before the advent of Christ, and the limbus infantum where those who die before they have reached the age of moral responsibility are gathered, may be dismissed without discussion as a mere speculation wholly void of biblical warrant. The antithetic conceptions of heaven and hell, and no others, lie as truly in the biblical picture of the intermediate life as in its disclosure of what transpires after the last judgment.

Over against the general doctrine of the Intermediate Life thus sketched in outline stand three opposite theories, the purgatorial, the naturalistic, and the probationary, each of which requires some passing examination. — The purgatorial dogma, as held by the Roman Catholic church since the age of Gregory, relates not to the great multitude of disembodied spirits, but simply to those

§ Opposite Theories: purgatorial, naturalistic, probationary.

members of that communion who are not at death sufficiently sanctified to be worthy of admission to heaven itself—that middle class, to use the phrase of Augustine, who are neither too good to need such purification nor too bad to have it granted to them. The Decrees of Trent and the Tridentine Profession simply assert the existence of such a place of disciplinary and purifying preparation, in which souls of this class are for a smaller or greater period detained until the process of grace is completed; and further say that this sanctifying process may be hastened and the door of heaven earlier opened through the suffrages of the faithful on earth, and principally through the acceptable sacrifice of the altar, and the saying of masses for the dead. The Greek Church in like manner declares (L. Cat. 376), that those who have departed this life in the faith but without having time to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, may be aided toward a blessed resurrection (or restoration) by prayers offered in their behalf, especially prayers offered in union with the oblation of the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, and by works of mercy done in faith for their memory. Moehler maintains that the hypothesis of such a purgatorium is an indispensable adjunct of the Roman doctrine of justification,—that it is inconceivable that by some violent mechanical process sin should be altogether purged out of the sinful spirit at the instant when the body dies,—and that the opposite theory, as Protestants hold it, is incompatible with the whole moral government of the world.

To this papal dogma which was proving to be such a source of profit and influence to the priesthood, and of bewilderment and superstition among the people at the dawn of the Reformation, Protestantism from the outset proclaimed its earnest antagonism,—everywhere affirming with Zwingli that sacred Scripture knows and reveals no purgatorium after this life. The Augsburg Conf. describes the Roman mass as a work which is supposed to take away the sins of the living and of the dead also, and declares that on this basis justification for both the living and the dead becomes a work of masses rather than an act of faith in Christ. It is needless to refer specifically to the strong condemnation of the Roman doctrine and usage, found in the subsequent continental creeds. The earlier British formularies are still more intense in their repudiation; the Thirty-Nine Articles speaking for all in its terse statement (XXII) that the Romish doctrine concerning purgatory is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God. The Symbols, after speaking of heaven and

hell, (XXXII : i) declare that besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none: and in the chapter on Worship, and also in the Larger Cat. (183), directly prohibit all prayer or intercession for the dead.

The Tridentine Council affirmed the dogma on the ground that it is warranted by the voice of ancient councils and the tradition of the fathers, and also by the authority of the sacred writings. But, aside from the fact that neither the ancient councils nor the patristic teachings are at all unanimous in its favor, the dogma is entirely without distinct support in the Bible. The purification which our Lord and the apostles describe, is a purification antecedent to death : nothing in their delineations of the intermediate life carries with it any positive suggestion that, whether by fire or discipline or in any other way, the souls of believers are essentially changed during that state or form of existence. On the other hand, this dogma is in direct antagonism with much that is taught in the Scriptures respecting the fixed estate of the soul in eternity, and the necessity for preparation for the future life while we are in the flesh. Other errors, such as the notion of human merit in the sphere of grace, and of works of supererogation, are inextricably involved in this dogma. It is also a false assumption that the priesthood or the church can have any real influence with God in the way of affecting the condition of the dead. The power to bind and loose, conferred by our Lord on the apostles and through them on his earthly church, cannot justly be regarded as extending to or being truly instrumental in the binding or loosing of souls beyond the grave. And if we add to all this the historical fact that this dogma has for centuries been and still is a fountain of both corruption and superstition within the Roman communion, we are justified in setting it aside as, in the language of the Anglican Article, a fond thing, vainly invented, without warrant in Scripture and repugnant to the Word of God.

The naturalistic theory of radical changes in character and consequently in destiny occurring during the intermediate life includes, not like the papal dogma just considered a single class of persons, but all of every class and condition who pass into that life as sinful. It affirms that such moral changes may be expected to occur hereafter as well as here through the action of capacities native to the soul itself,—that the personal forces which are seen to be producing great spiritual transformations among men in this world, may induce similar transformations in numberless cases, and possibly in all, after death,—and that the universe of

the evil may thus by degrees be depopulated, and all the vast multitude of disembodied spirits be brought finally by this process into fellowship with the multitude of the good in one blessed concourse of holiness and bliss forevermore. What Martensen (Dogmatics) calls the inextinguishable capability of good within man, and which may in the life to come assert its restorative power even more effectually than in this world, will—it is thought—work out such spiritual results perhaps universally in the realm of disembodied spirits. It is sometimes suggested that the environments of the intermediate life will be much more likely than those which now surround men, to excite the better nature, to lead to calm reflection on the great problem of character, apart from the entangling influence of bodily temptations, to encourage virtuous purposes and aspirations, and so to assist vitally in renovating and purifying the soul. It is urged that by these natural methods the heathen and infants dying in infancy, and thoughtless sinners in Christian lands, and even the most wicked and obdurate transgressors, may be lifted out of their sinfulness, and progressively elevated into a higher experience of truth, of duty, of unselfish and holy love.

It is impracticable here to trace this theory through its various ramifications, or to state in detail the several arguments adduced to sustain it. If we turn to the Bible for light, we at once discover that, aside from here or there a phrase or passage taken out of its connections, and infused with a meaning or color never contemplated by the inspired writers, there is in fact nothing in Scripture to suggest or sustain such an expectation, but on the contrary very much, especially in the New Testament, which is radically at variance with it. If such a vast process as this, carrying in it the eternal destinies of uncounted millions, is actually going on now, and has been in progress from the first, and will continue while the intermediate state of being lasts, it is inconceivable that there should be no hint of such a sublime transaction in a book which professes to foretell the future destinies of mankind,—especially when the disclosure of such a tremendous verity would be not only a matter of vital interest but one of vast practical moment to our sinful and prostrate race.

But, waiving the fact that the Word of God furnishes no adequate foundation for this specious theory, we may on rational grounds alone declare the anticipation vain. The moral developments occurring in this world are such as to justify no such expectation touching the life to come. We nowhere see pagan races becoming virtuous and holy through any innate energy;

we nowhere see the sinful and the reprobate as a class pausing in their evil courses, revolutionizing their moral experiences, cleansing themselves from the taints of evil, and of their own accord coming into loving affiliation with saints and angels and with God. Nor can we find any sufficient warrant in what we know of the native tendencies of the heathen mind, or of like predispositions among adult transgressors in Christian lands, to sustain the anticipation that the sin which is so natural and so dominant in this life, will be resisted and eradicated when this life shall be exchanged for another. If sin were a physical product simply—if it sprang entirely from the animal organism and tendencies of man, such a result might possibly be hoped for hereafter. But so long as sin is seen to be a matter in which the soul even more than the body is involved—a matter which death therefore has no power to extirpate, the dream of ultimate restoration through energies resident in the sinful soul itself becomes little better than an unwarrantable illusion. And further, it is not to be forgotten that sin seems to exist in man under a law of growth,—that this law of growth becomes apparently more and more potential in men even down to the last hour of life,—and that so far as we can see, its potency will continue to increase, unless some exterior power interferes, age after age, forever.

But, without dwelling upon other considerations, drawn from the study of man as a sinner, which are manifestly at variance with the hypothesis of naturalistic transmutations from sin to holiness in any coming form of existence, we may note, first, the hurtful influence of this dogma in deterring men from prompt attention to the claims and the opportunities of grace in this life; and secondly, the significant fact that no evangelical creed or church has ever recognized it as valid. The Westminster divines certainly knew nothing of a restoration of the soul to holiness through any innate experiences or powers—a restoration whereby the sinner not only remembers and confesses his sins to himself, but by an interior energy still resident within him, and under the new conditions entered upon in the future state, comes back, as of himself, to duty and to God. Their strong doctrine respecting the depravity and helplessness of the sinner in this life, his loss of all ability of will towards spiritual good, and his entire dependence on divine grace for recovery from this condition, is wholly inconsistent with the anticipation that at some time hereafter he will of himself, and without any gracious aid, rectify his corrupted moral nature and become a fit companion for saints and angels before the throne of God.

What has been termed the probationary theory affirms, like the preceding, the possibility or probability of the spiritual restoration of multitudes in the intermediate life, but bases this anticipation, not on the ground of the inherent capabilities of the soul itself or of some favorable effect of environment, but simply on the extension of divine grace to sinners in that life, and the utilizing of the remedial agencies incorporated in the Gospel to induce conviction, conversion and ultimate salvation. Some advocates present such salvation as a possible or probable hypothesis only: others urge it, with great confidence as actual,—sometimes as actual in some individuals or some classes, such as infants or the heathen, or the unevangelized masses in Christian lands; and sometimes as certain to result ultimately in the redemption of every sinner, and the blotting out of sin and its consequences from the entire moral universe.

This theory is supposed to be warranted by the Scriptures, and the following classes of passages are adduced in its support, either directly or by inference: first, passages setting forth the fullness and freeness of the grace offered in the Gospel, and in their form justifying the inference that this full and free salvation may be extended in its range beyond the present life; second, passages exhibiting in comprehensive ways the readiness of God to forgive sin, and suggesting by clear inference his readiness to grant such forgiveness in the intermediate world as in this; third, passages intimating the gracious limitation and the possible termination of punishment for sin, if not in the present life, still in the life to come—with the marked exception of the sin against the Holy Ghost: fourth, passages suggesting that judgment upon personal character may not occur before the end of the world, with the implication that at any time prior to that general judgment, even many ages after death, the soul may be saved through penitence and faith in Christ: fifth, passages affirming or at least strongly implying the formal proclamation of the Gospel to the dead—as in the descent of our Lord to the spirits in prison: sixth, passages directly suggesting by illustration or example the doctrine of a second probation, to be granted to mankind after death: and seventh, passages which set forth unbelief, or the rejection of Christ and his Gospel, as the only ground of human condemnation—with their implication that those who have never had the opportunity of receiving him in this life shall be granted such opportunity hereafter. It is impracticable here to present the particular texts adduced; these seven classes include every passage that has ever been urged in support of this theory.

Certain general considerations are also presented in connection with these biblical evidences. One of these is based on the known character of God, as too righteous on the one hand and too benevolent on the other to make no provision for at least the opportunity to be saved after death, in the case of all those who have had no adequate opportunity in this life. Another is based on the universal headship of Christ—a headship not over believers only but over the entire race of mankind as the second Adam, and including consequently all those members of the race who have died, no less than those who still remain on the earth. Another rests on the inherent capabilities of the Christian scheme as in fact inexhaustible—the one absolute religion,—no less truly fitted to meet the moral needs of a disembodied spirit than to help and save the sinner in this world. Still another is found in the surviving elements of good, such as the capacity to understand and appreciate saving truth, and to repent of sin and turn to Christ for salvation,—elements which death cannot destroy, but may rather greatly stimulate into effective action. Another rests on the testimony of the Christianized consciousness, which refuses to accept the doctrine that death terminates probation, but demands that provision such as the Gospel furnishes, be made for the extension of the possibility of grace into the intermediate life: see Farrar, Eternal Hope.

The answer to the biblical evidences adduced lies in such incontrovertible propositions as the following: first, that the offer of salvation through Christ is invariably presented in Scripture as an offer to be accepted or rejected during the present life; second, that sinful men are solemnly warned against postponement of such acceptance, even during this life, and specifically on the ground that this and this only is the day of salvation; third, that the converting and sanctifying agency of the Holy Spirit, which is everywhere set forth as an indispensable condition of salvation, is always represented as efficient in the present life, and is in no case promised to men after death; fourth, that the church, and all the helpful instrumentalities associated with it in the interest of salvation, are in like manner invariably described as operative in this world only; fifth, that such passages as that respecting the sin against the Holy Ghost and that concerning the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison, must be so interpreted as to preserve the divine harmony between them and the more generic teachings of the Word as to the forgiveness of sin and to the mediatorial mission of our Lord; sixth, that reward and retribution after death are without exception represented as being the outcome

of our stewardship whether faithful or unfaithful during the present life, and as determined judicially as soon as that stewardship is ended ; seventh, that the clear doctrine of the eternity of punishment shows that at least in some cases, and we know not how many, the offer of salvation, if made in the intermediate life, is unavailing—the soul still willfully abiding in its sinfulness. These are simply the more familiar and available forms of the incontrovertible argument to be drawn from the Divine Word against the probationary theory in whatever aspect presented.

In respect to the more general considerations named, it is perhaps sufficient to say that they involve obvious and serious misconceptions of God and of his moral government over men,—of Christ and his relation as the head over all his chosen people,—and of the Gospel, as to its real nature and scope and adaptations. They involve also kindred misconceptions of man on one side as a being capable of salvation, and of the intermediate life on the other as a retributive state, wherein the evil and the good are judicially and finally separate. Nor can the witness of Christian consciousness be urged in favor of this hypothetic view of that life, so long as that consciousness is not uniform in such support, but in the breast of the vast majority of believers is positively opposed to that hypothesis.

Although some of the Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, taught that the redemptive mission of Christ extended beyond this life and was available not only for the dead but for fallen angels also until the day of judgment, the witness of Christian symbolism against this theory is unanimous and decisive. So far as the three ancient creeds may be quoted, it is quite obvious that the forgiveness of sins mentioned in them is as much an experience of time as the gift of the Holy Ghost, the organization of the Catholic church, or the communion of saints. The symbolic books of both the Greek and the Roman communions, while affirming the kindred dogma of purgatory, recognize no such intermediate estate of grace and restoration. It is even more certain that this theory finds no support in Protestant symbolism. One searches in vain for it in the confessional books of Lutheranism, in the creeds of the Reformed churches on the Continent, or in those of the British Isles. One searches for it in vain in the doctrinal declarations of the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, or in the professed faith of any evangelical body of our own time. Least of all does it find any shadow of support in the Presbyterian formularies. These Symbols are as silent as the Bible itself respecting any transplantation of the Gospel with its

peculiar agencies and instrumentalities, any ministrations of the Spirit, any gracious work or kingdom of Christ, in the intermediate life. There is not a single sentence or phrase or casual word or hint in Confession or Catechisms on which such a claim could by any ingenuity of reasoning be based. Their invariable teaching is that death terminates the present estate of probation, and brings in the consequent estate of reward and retribution. They invariably represent the Gospel with its various elements and factors as a matter of earth and time. Their account of the operations of the Holy Spirit limits these operations entirely to this world. Their doctrine of the Covenants suggests no other fellowship with God than that into which the sinner may through grace enter while his earthly day of opportunity is passing. Their vivid descriptions of the free will in man, and of his effectual calling through grace, of justification and adoption and sanctification, of saving faith and repentance and good works, and of the perseverance of saints and their assurance of salvation, are based entirely on the assumption that this life is the period in which such experiences are to be realized. What they affirm on all these points is absolutely exclusive of any other view than that salvation through Christ is a consummation to be attained or lost before death.

It is especially to be noticed that the Symbols allow no distinction to be made at this point in favor of infants or imbecile persons, or even the pagan world, so far as that world came within their range of vision. Elect infants and, according to current belief, all infants, being thus elect, are redeemed by Christ, not hereafter, but in this world, and are regenerated and saved through the operation of the Holy Spirit, not in the future state, but before or at their death. The declaration that the Spirit worketh when and where and how he pleaseth, was never intended to include his gracious working in some coming life, but only within the range of earth and time. Imbecile persons who are unable to heed the outward calls of grace, are said in like manner to be graciously cared for, not after death but before or in death. In the condemnation which is pronounced upon the heathen world, not for the rejection of a Gospel which that world has never heard, but for its neglect of the law of God written on the heart, for its refusal to follow the revealing and guiding light of nature, nothing is said about any solution of the great problem of character after this life is over. It is the sin of the pagan races that they are now rejecting the tender call of God to repentance and submission to him, now following rather the devices

of their own heart, without regard to what God commands; and it is this sin which, under the divine government, constitutes the ground of their condemnation as they pass from this world into another. The solemn chapter on the Law of God must make it abundantly clear to every candid reader that the Symbols are consistent with themselves and are unequivocal in their teachings here, and that whatever pious hope may be indulged by any at this point must find its support and justification elsewhere.

9. Particular Judgment at death: nature and effects.

The doctrine of a Particular Judgment, taking place in the case of each and every soul, in immediate conjunction with its admission to the intermediate life, has already been more than once suggested. Yet its practical importance, especially in its bearings upon much that has been said heretofore, is such as to command for it separate and special consideration. Viewed on rational grounds alone, it seems a natural and necessary consequence that a separation of souls into two great classes, on the basis of character, should occur, not at some remote period in the future life, but at the time of death. Such a separation is, in the nature of things, inevitable: it is the only possible outcome of the present state and experience of probation. A continuous commingling of the holy and the wicked, substantially such as occurs in this life, and that for an indefinite period, and possibly even till the final judgment at the end of the world, would be an experience to be dreaded rather than desired. And such a separation can be grounded on nothing but some essential difference in character; it must be based in the last resort on the final relation of the soul to an accepted or rejected Christ. And this final relation, with all its solemn outcome, must be fixed at the hour of death; it cannot be postponed to some remote era in the eternal state. Such is the clear witness of Scripture. The promise of our Lord to the dying thief, the vision of the expiring Stephen, the ecstatic declarations of Paul, the triumphal song of Peter in his first Epistle, and other biblical illustrations, show abundantly that death for the righteous is the gateway, not to such a mixed condition as the present life presents, but to a condition separate, special, everlasting, such as holy character alone can determine. And what is thus seen to be true respecting the righteous, can be shown on equal warrant from Scripture to be true concerning the wicked also.

That this separation is judicial becomes apparent at a glance. It is not merely the result of certain natural laws or tendencies whereby men of themselves seek their own companionship,

whether it be good or evil. Nor is it an historic process simply, carried on through ages, and finally reaching its culmination in hell or heaven. It occurs in the immediate presence of Christ as judge; it involves a conviction of sin and guilt in view of the Law and the Gospel of God; it necessitates a decision on his part at the very threshold of eternity. There is, indeed, a sense in which the wicked are condemned already, even before that solemn hour of adjudication dawns upon them, but all antecedent condemnation must become secondary in the presence of such an hour and such a judgment. The supposition that Christ begins to exercise his judicial functions only at the end of the world, is obviously at variance with many declarations of Scripture, distinctly affirming that the estate of the righteous is judicially settled at their death; and also that the wicked are already undergoing judicial punishment. Nor is there any conflict between the two conceptions. One eminent American theologian (Smith, H. B., Syst. Theol.) has rightly said that what is called the general or last is not the first passing of judgment, but the final manifestation of it. The position that at the general judgment the first passing of judgment will occur, uproots the Scriptural doctrine of sin, and of the penalty of death which has already begun to be inflicted upon men. And another equally eminent teacher (Shedd, Dogm. Theol.), has also said that the private judgment at death and the public judgment at the last day coincide, because in the intermediate state there is no alteration of moral character, and consequently no alteration of the sentence passed at death.

It is a most impressive picture which Isaac Taylor, in his remarkable essay on the Dissolution of Human Nature, has drawn of the condition of a soul thus ushered at death into the hall of judgment,—those experiences which originate in the union of soul and body fading away,—all forms of external excitation ceasing,—the soul thrown back upon its own moral experiences, whether good or depraved,—only the individual life remaining, and the moral person poised and resting on his own center. As that graphic writer suggests, the good and the wicked are thus separated by an interior process antecedent to all judicial inquiry; each person becoming intuitively his own judge, and of himself determining what his place and destiny should be. But above all this, is the conscious coming of the soul, wearing no robe but the character it has woven for itself in this life, into the very presence of its Maker who is also its Judge, and by whom its worth and its eternity are to be formally decided. It is of course impossible for us to frame any adequate picture of such a scene, or to conceive

of the thoughts and the emotions which at such a moment must fill and thrill the breast. The Bible attempts no such description: it simply states the fact and gives full assurance of the occurrence of the solemn event, but leaves place and time and incident in an impenetrable shadow.

The importance of emphasizing this doctrine is manifest, especially just at this juncture when the entire teaching of the inspired Word concerning the intermediate life is so widely challenged. The fact that Christ is to judge mankind at the end of the world is explicitly affirmed in each of the ancient creeds; but both the Greek and the Roman symbolism affirms or implies the further fact that he is ever and always the Judge as well as the Savior of men. The dogma of purgatory presents no exception, inasmuch as those who pass through that experience are not condemned but saved persons,—the purgatorial fires being not punitive but disciplinary and purifying in their purpose. The importance of recognizing this truth in their doctrinal system was very apparent to the men who framed the creeds of Protestantism from the beginning. It is true that the general judgment at the end of the world was more conspicuous in their thought; yet their invariable doctrine was that death terminates the state of probation, settles the question of character, and determines the eternal destiny by a judicial process. Thus the Irish Articles declare in explicit terms, that after this life is ended the souls of God's children shall be presently received into heaven, there to enjoy unspeakable comforts, and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, there to endure endless torments; and such a separation must, from the nature of the case, assume the character of a judgment pronounced by Christ presently, or as soon as the soul shall have closed its earthly existence. But the doctrine of the Westminster divines is still more full and explicit. Their generic teaching is that man, having sinned and come short of the glory of God, is in a state of condemnation judicially even in this life; that there is no sin of man so small but it deserves such condemnation; that there is no way of escape from this condemnation except through coming unto Christ under an existing covenant of grace; and that for those who refuse the offer of salvation as presented in this life, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but only retributive judgment as the proper outcome of their earthly unbelief. Both Catechisms, and especially the Larger, confirm this teaching in the strong declaration (L. C., 25–27) that men by nature are the children of wrath, slaves to Satan, under the divine displeasure, and justly liable to divine punishment. They also teach that

redemption from this condition occurs in time only (L. C., 59, 60), and that those who do not receive that redemption in time cannot be saved, but are under the wrath of God forever.

More specifically, the Symbols affirm (L. C., 85) that the righteous even in death are delivered from all remaining sting and curse of sin, and that they enter at once upon the blessed estate of communion with Christ, for which they have been preparing in the present life. They assure us that this communion is enjoyed immediately after death, on the ground that the righteous are then at once perfected in holiness, and so made meet for such celestial fellowship. As to the wicked, they in like manner assure us (L. C., 86) that death judicially determines their eternal condition; and their description of the punishments of sin in the world to come (L. C., 29) leaves upon the mind no other impression than that such punishment begins at once when the present probationary experience is ended. The impressive declaration of the Confession already quoted, that the souls of men at death immediately return to God who gave them, and are at once separated by him into two great classes on the basis of character as determined during this life, seems to put the question entirely at rest for all who acknowledge its authority. Nothing can be more emphatic than the decisive statement at the close of this section: Between these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none. How is it possible for any one, in view of such statements, to affirm that the conception of such a judgment has no proper place in the Christian scheme, but is merely a crude importation from ethnic sources, without any right to claim our acceptance? It would be as easy to claim that the idea of God, or of the incarnation, or the conception of a supernatural revelation, or the belief in a personal immortality, had flowed from such foreign sources into Christianity, because traces of these fundamental truths are found in crude forms in certain natural religions, or in the speculations of certain heathen sages.

10. The Final Advent: its occurrence: its nature and results.

The Intermediate Life whose characteristics and special experiences and events have now been considered, is not the ultimate or everlasting life of either the righteous or the sinful. The biblical phrase, a thousand years, indicates a long period in the history of our race, if taken literally, but probably suggests a much longer though definite period during which the Gospel shall be universally

known and received, and Christ shall be universally recognized as the Savior and Lord over mankind. But this period, before whose holy splendors all the antecedent history of the race will pale into insignificance, and in whose light the dark problem of sin and condemnation will probably receive a signal solution, will not be perpetual. The career of humanity on the earth, and the experience of the innumerable myriads of disembodied spirits dwelling in the intermediate state, will at last be brought by divine decree to a decisive close,—a termination final and transcendent coming in that appointed hour alike to the universe of the living and to the two universes of the dead. And the event which will signalize this wondrous change in state and experience for the human race, and which will throw wide open the door for the entrance of the entire race on its true and ultimate eternity, is the second or rather final advent of our Lord Jesus Christ on the earth.

It has already been said that neither the formularies of Westminster nor any other Protestant symbols recognize any coming of Christ antecedent to the millennial era, except in the spiritual sense in which he is always coming in grace to believers and to his church, or in chastisement or retribution to those who live and die in impenitence. It has been shown that the conception of a physical appearance and a material reign, with an universal empire established over all nations and wielded from Jerusalem as a royal center—an empire exhibiting its majesty by suppressing human sin through resistless power and by exalting the righteous to thrones of judicial supremacy over the race, is directly condemned by Christian symbolism as being unwarranted by Holy Scripture, and as dishonoring to the Gospel. It needs only to be added here that, while the sacred writers naturally gather from the Jewish State, and especially from the palmy era of David and Solomon, the imagery with which to describe more graphically the events and phenomena of the millennium, they do not allow the mind to rest in any merely physical or sensuous visions of that sublime age. Nor can any portions of either the Old Testament or the New be interpreted in a literalistic way, in the interest of such conceptions, without plunging the mind into endless confusion or filling it with small and illusive views of Christ and his redemptive work.

Another kindred error of even greater seriousness is the error of regarding Christ, now ascended into the heavens and acting there as our intercessor, as in fact wholly absent from this world and from his earthly church. His corporeal absence, so far as

corporeity may be affirmed of him in his celestial exaltation, by no means warrants the inference of a spiritual and personal absence. It is explained that he is present here in the sense that he knows whatever is transpiring in the interest of his church, and present also in the further sense that from his heavenly throne he wields all the providential and gracious power needful to protect his church from its enemies, and to propagate and establish it in the world. It is suggested that he is present vicariously through the Holy Spirit as his agent, who is fully empowered to complete the work left by him at his ascension, and in whose activities and products we see Christ spiritually, though he is really far away from us in heaven. It has been said that he is present because his truth, his ordinances, his organized church, his believing and faithful disciples are here carrying out his great commission, given them at his departure, to disciple the nations in his name. But it is held that in himself he is absent and will be absent throughout the present dispensation, and will personally visit our earth again but once, and that either at the beginning or at the close of the millennial age.

This view involves at the outset a serious departure from the biblical doctrine of Christ as divine—as God. It is said in the Confession, that in the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power and eternity: as stated in the Larger Catechism, these three Persons are one true, eternal God, equal in power and glory. Whatever attributes belonged to Christ as the Son of God prior to his incarnation, therefore belong to him now: whatever of limitation or depotentiation occurred to him while incarnate in the flesh, must have ended at his exaltation to glory at the right hand of the Father. His original deity must have enrobed him again in the hour of ascension: every perfection that inhered in God the Father resided at that hour in him also. And if God is, in the old scholastic phrase, a Being whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere, it must be true that he who was Immanuel, God with us, while he dwelt in the flesh, is Immanuel still—present everywhere and at all times, and specially present on this earth and with his people. We can no more affirm space of the glorified Son than of the glorious Father, yet in a sense above all conceptions of space our Lord is truly and essentially present on the earth, as well as in heaven:—present to individual believers living and dying, present in every assemblage of his saints, present with his apostles and with his church, in every age, in every land. Calvin quotes Augustine as teaching the spiritual presence of

Christ with his people in conjunction with the fact of his corporeal absence ; and himself adds that, while his body was elevated above all heavens, Christ was ever truly present with his church according to his promise—his power and energy being diffused and extended beyond all the limits of heaven and earth. No other view can adequately interpret either his own direct declarations or the teaching of the later Scriptures. The signs of that presence are not physical, nor are they revealed in the ordinary experience of man ; they are spiritual in essence and in their effects : yet they are very real to the apprehension of faith. Wherever the Word is effectually preached, Christ is there ; wherever his ordained sacraments are administered, Christ is there ; wherever his saints are assembled for worship or for service in his cause, he is there ; wherever providences in the interest of religion are transpiring, or missions or other great enterprises are carried forward, or his gracious kingdom is amid conflict and sacrifice ascending toward its predestined triumph in the earth, he is there—our glorious Immanuel still, God ever with us.

Such presence of Christ is doubtless to be in its full measure one of the peculiar features of the millennial era,—a personal presence, so clear, so tender, so glorious, that the church and the world will no more question it, than did the Jewish priesthood and the people question his presence, when they saw Christ visibly in the flesh. And the just presumption is that the consciousness of such an ineffable divine presence, diffusing itself everywhere as if it were incense in the atmosphere of life, will become more and more distinct in human belief while the millennial years roll on—until men shall doubt it much less than they now doubt the immanent presence of God, the Father, in the vast domain of nature or in the events of our ordinary life. And this conviction will abide in the world more and more potentially, even amid that mysterious outbreak of unbelief which the Apocalypse dimly hints at as to occur near the close of the thousand years of holiness and peace, until those years are ended at last in the final, visible, sublime coming of the Son of Man not for the advancement of grace but as a King unto judgment.

That there is to be such a manifestation at that period—otherwise styled the end of the world—is a doctrine in which universal Christendom, Greek and Roman as well as Protestant, is fully agreed. The belief in it rests primarily on the direct declarations of our Lord himself,—from whose positive and repeated statements the church has derived its faith. It was asserted by the Apostles speaking in his name, and was believed by the apostolic

church, in all its developing sections. We know historically that such an advent was ardently expected as an immediate event, by many of the earlier Fathers, and that the anticipation of it even as near at hand was extensively current in the church of the first three centuries. It made its way into the most ancient creeds, standing by the side of the story of the incarnation and life, the death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord, as an unchallengeable article of belief. The Protestant Confessions, so far as they aim to present a comprehensive synopsis of the Christian doctrine, invariably incorporate that article, with more or less of elaboration. The Westminster Symbols are specially full in their affirmations. In the Larger Cat. (56) it is declared that Christ is to be exalted in his coming again to judge the world; that he shall come at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of his glory; that all his holy angels will be with him in that sublime advent, which shall be heralded with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and that he will then, by virtue of an authority vested in him from all eternity, judge the world in righteousness. These descriptions of attendant pomp and glory are not framed by the imagination of man, but are set forth literally by our Lord himself and by his inspired apostles. No details of time or circumstance, or any hints respecting the decisive event whereby it may be exactly foreseen, are anywhere given: the event itself stands out in all its solemnity, He shall come, He shall come, to judge the world!

Certain events are clearly indicated as concurrent with this final advent. The church will in that solemn hour reach its completion; the institutions and ordinances of our holy religion will cease; the proclamation of grace through repentance and faith will be ended; the efforts and sacrifices of saints for the promulgation of the Gospel will be required no longer; the Sabbath and the sanctuary will have accomplished their peaceful and hallowing mission. In a word, the mediatorial work of Christ, carried on so patiently, will then be finished as completely as his atoning sacrifice was finished on the cross. In the world of disembodied spirits also all activity, all experience, all possibilities of good or evil, will then cease; as a separate sphere of being, the intermediate life will have reached its close. The voice of the archangel will command instant pause, instant silence, throughout the moral universe: the trumpet of God will arouse all men to immediate, intense, and thrilling anticipation of that which is to be. The advent itself will be the one absorbing transaction through all the realms of moral existence. And with that advent

two events of supreme interest will transpire: the resurrection of the body and the general or final judgment.

The first of these events is the Resurrection,—the restoration to vitality of the bodies of all who have died from the beginning of time down to the final advent, and their union again with the souls which once inhabited them. This process involves not a single class as to character, or those who lived under some specific dispensation, but, in the language of our Lord himself, all that are in the graves. The time when this stupendous event will occur is also indicated by the Lord: They shall hear his voice—his voice at the last great day—and shall come forth to life. The single passage in the Apocalypse which suggests the resurrection of certain persons at the beginning of the thousand millennial years, if interpreted literally, may have an explanation in the impressive fact recorded by Matthew, that in conjunction with the crucifixion graves were opened and bodies of saints which slept arose, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many. It is at least not incredible that at the dawning of the millennium a similar phenomenon should take place,—the souls of martyrs or eminent witnesses for Christ, appearing again in mortal form, for some special ministry of grace in conjunction with that great event. Whether this be or be not a just interpretation of that somewhat perplexing passage, and of one or two others which speak of the resurrection of the just as if it were an event distinct in time, there can be no doubt that the New Testament teaches broadly the doctrine of one comprehensive resurrection—a resurrection concurrent with and induced by the final advent of Christ unto judgment.

11. Resurrection of Christ: of all the dead: the resurrection body.

It may freely be admitted that such an event is to our view simply incomprehensible—a mystery too vast and profound to be measured by any human experience. But it should be noted that this mystery belongs to a large class of mysteries, of which not one is penetrable by the intellect of man. The mystery of creation from nothing, or of the transmutation of unorganized into vital matter,—the mystery of growing plants and flowers, of the unfolding of the oak from the acorn, of animal instincts and movements, of the intelligence discernible in the inferior animals,—the mystery of the combination of body and spirit in man, or of the action of the spirit upon the bodily organism in our daily life,—the mystery of miracles, such as were wrought under a

wide variety of conditions and reliably reported in the Scriptures,—the mystery of the moral change induced in regeneration and sanctification,—the mystery of death, and of the intermediate life as experienced by disembodied spirits, are each and all entirely beyond human comprehension. Yet in all these cases the facts involved are intelligently believed, though human experience and human investigation shed no light on the deep veil of mystery that envelops them. In like manner we simply accept the fact here affirmed, on the authority of Christ and of the Scriptures generally, although the fact lies wholly outside of our personal cognizance, and is one which to our dim vision seems incredible.

Yet the doctrine is so wrought into the warp and woof of the later Scriptures, that it could not be torn out without working irreparable damage to the entire structure. It is even set forth, especially in connection with the resurrection of Christ, as a kind of test and certification of many related truths. If duly recognized, it sheds a remarkable radiance on much else that is taught respecting eternity: once admitted, it explains, confirms, glorifies nearly all other doctrines within the same section of Revelation. It is also a doctrine of vast spiritual value, though it has been challenged as being not only incomprehensible, but also undesirable and mischievous. He alone, says Calvin, has made solid proficiency in the Gospel who has been accustomed to continual meditation on the blessed resurrection. He adds elsewhere, that there are two sufficient grounds of faith, the omnipotence of God and the similitude of Christ. It is not too much to say that the heart of humanity instinctively responds to it, even while the intellect questions or objects. In some deep sense, it is a crowning truth in the Christian scheme,—especially when viewed in conjunction with the doctrine of the final judgment, and of eternal retribution and reward.

Some presumptive proofs are urged in favor of the doctrine. Nature furnishes several suggestive illustrations, in which existence—as in the case of the buried seed—seems to be perpetuated by a continuous death and resurrection. On a broader scale, nature seems to prophesy—as in the development of spring after the long and dark winter—some better future for the decaying body of man. There are also instincts and aspirations in the soul which lead us to desire the rehabilitation of the spirit in such bodily organism: at least, the thought of such restoration and union is to most minds much more natural and welcome than the opposite. There is also something in our conception of the judgment as a process, which suggests that the body itself should

share with the spirit in experiencing the fruitage of the deeds done in the body,—the physical pictures of bliss or woe presented in the Scriptures being in a sense justified by our innate feeling and conviction. But there are also opposite presumptions drawn from what we know of the decay of the physical organism, of the manner in which the materials of the perished body pass into other forms of life, of the fact that the earth itself is already one vast cemetery, and that the dust of untold millions is yet to be borne upon the winds, or swept downward to the ocean, or consumed to nothingness in great conflagrations,—there are so many and such serious presumptions against the doctrine that on natural grounds it could never be established, if indeed the natural intellect could ever have conceived it.

But the witness of Holy Writ is decisive. That testimony is centered in the fact that Christ has risen from the dead, and thus has become, in the Pauline phrase, the first-fruits of them that sleep in the silence of the grave. Our faith in the resurrection of Christ is the vital condition of faith in the general resurrection. The proof as to this fact is historical, and may therefore be measured by the human understanding. The elements in that proof are, first of all, that our Lord prophesied his own resurrection, and staked upon its occurrence his claim to human credence; secondly, the testimony of the four evangelists to the fact—testimony which possesses the reliable qualities of intelligence and honesty and harmoniousness; thirdly, the miracles wrought by Christ, especially the three miracles of restoration to life, may be taken as strongly evidential; fourthly, the entire Messiahship of Christ becomes a failure and a deception, if indeed he did not rise from the dead according to his promise in confirmation of his claim; fifthly, this historic event becomes a convincing witness in favor of the entire Gospel concerning him, and was so accepted by the church of the apostolic century; sixthly, the resurrection of Christ is continually introduced in the epistolary Scriptures, not merely as an unquestionable fact, but as a stimulant to duty and as an assurance that all who believe on him shall rise also—that even the wicked shall rise into new life at his summons. Still further: much of the doctrine, precept, promise, warning, urged upon Jew and Gentile by the apostles and their helpers, rested on this foundation. The wide historic acceptance of the truth by the Christian Church from the beginning, and on the basis of evidence more extensive, doubtless, than has come down to us; its incorporation in the three ancient creeds; its full and unvarying affirmation in the confessions of the Reformation;

its unchallenged place among the cardinal verities of our holy faith at this day, all combine yet further to prove that the Lord has risen indeed, and has made his rising clear by sufficient and incontrovertible evidences.

On the basis of this fact, the resurrection of believers, and indeed of all mankind, securely rests. In thus ascending from the abyss of the grave, Christ not only proved his own power over death, and showed that although he might be corporeally absent he was still present continually with his earthly disciples: he also gave them thereby a conclusive proof of his power to give life to them, and even to raise them with him from the tomb, though they might sleep for ages within its narrow walls. Hence the doctrine of a general resurrection became a sure and glorious corollary from the assured fact that Christ himself had risen from the dead. There are many allusions in the Old Testament—especially in the Psalms and the prophetical writings—which, when considered in the clearer light of the New, go to show that the devout Hebrews contemplated such resurrection as at least possible—just as they regarded the doctrine of an immortal existence as partly if not entirely sustained by ancient revelations. In the New Testament, as might be anticipated after the full disclosures by our Lord, the resurrection is distinctly affirmed, sometimes with reference to the righteous, at others with reference to the wicked, and often with respect to all men without regard to character. The effort to explain such testimonies as referring wholly to spiritual resurrection—to the restoration to newness of moral life through grace, is altogether insufficient. Questions of time, condition, manner are often raised on the basis of these biblical testimonies—questions which the inspired Word refuses to answer, doubtless for the reason that such answer would be of no spiritual benefit, and might become an element of spiritual mischief. It is enough for us during this life to be assured of the transcendent fact.

One question often discussed may be briefly noted here,—that which relates to the nature of the resurrection body, and to its identity with the present body. Reference is sometimes made for illustration to the transfigured body, or to the raised body of our Lord, or to that body perhaps still further sublimated, which was conveyed by him into heaven. There is ground for the belief that the bodies of the saints will in some mysterious way be fashioned like unto his glorious body, whatever that may have been. We are also warranted in believing that the resurrection body will be real—will be spiritual and immortal—will be free

from the taint of flesh and blood—will not retain the particular accidents or merely phenomenal qualities of the earthly organism; —also that it will be fitted to the nature and uses of the soul, and will, it may be presumed, be recognizable. Respecting the nature of this identity with our present corporeal organism, it can only be said that it will not be an identity of atoms or of material substance, but rather of the principle of life, or of organization. There certainly is in man such a vital principle, lodged in the body at its very formation, and which maintains the identity of that body through all the changes that occur in the animal structure during the present life,—a vital principle which death does not destroy, and which may out of material at command shape for itself a new physical organism, that is identical with the grosser physical organism which perished at death. The essential fact is the identification, whatever may be the peculiar characteristics or incidents of that identification. That the body of the resurrection will correspond to the individuality of the earthly person in every essential quality, is all Scripture warrants us in affirming.

As a corollary from the fact of the resurrection of Christ, belief in the general resurrection just described found its way readily into the earliest Christian creeds, and became one of the fundamental doctrines of the universal church. The Longer Catechism of the Greek church (366–367) defines this resurrection as an act of the almighty power of God, and declares in answer to all objection that, since God formed the body from the ground originally, he can equally restore it after it has perished in the ground. The Council of Trent, in arguing for the veneration of saints and martyrs, affirms that their holy bodies as the living members of Christ shall be by Him raised unto an eternal and glorious life. The declarations of Protestant symbolism are too numerous and too familiar to be adduced here: see Augsburg Conf., XVII; Second Helvetic, XXVI; Heidelberg Cat., 45; Belgic Conf., XXXVII; Scotch Conf., X, XVII; Thirty-Nine Articles, IV. The Symbols give no countenance to the theory of two resurrections, separated by a long interval of time and having widely different designs. The time of the general or universal resurrection is specified (ch. XXXII; L. C., 87) as the last day; and then not any special class but all the dead, it is said, shall be raised up together. This time is further fixed by the declaration (L. C., 88) that immediately after the resurrection shall follow the general and final judgment of angels and men. The full identity or oneness of the resurrection body with

the present body is strongly affirmed, though no explanation of the nature of that oneness is attempted; they are to be *the self-same body and none other*. It is beautifully said that the earthly *bodies of the saints are even in death somehow united to Christ, and that they rest in their graves* as in their beds (L. C. 86) till at the last day they shall be *raised up again and united to their souls by his mighty power* and by virtue of his resurrection as their Head. It is also said, with an impressive antithesis, that the *bodies of the wicked are kept in their graves* as in their prisons, until the resurrection and judgment of the last great day. In the same connection it is intimated that the bodies of the just (L. C., 87), being raised by the Spirit of Christ, shall be endued with new qualities, raised in power and beauty and *made spiritual and incorruptible* like the glorious body of the Saviour Himself, while those of the wicked are *raised up in dishonor*, as by the authority of an offended judge who summons them into his presence for final condemnation. For the just that will be a day of welcome deliverance and of consummated glory; to the wicked it must be a day of wrath and of unspeakable humiliation.

12. General Judgment: necessity and nature: Christ the judge.

The other great event which is to occur in connection with the second advent of Christ, and which is revealed as the object of that transcendent coming, is the General or Universal Judgment. It has already been said that the probation of men closes with the present life, and that after death there comes a judgment, individual and particular, which determines the character and destiny of each soul forever. But it has also been said that the condition of award or retribution into which the disembodied spirit enters at death is a temporary and preliminary condition, though it should be prolonged to multitudes through many ages. The particular judgment is thus introductory to that final adjudication of the race as a race of which our Lord in the gospel of Matthew speaks so impressively, and in which he declares himself to be the universal Judge. The particular judgment is not intended to usurp the functions or to preclude the necessity of that ultimate adjudication. This has its own specific and loftier and more comprehensive uses. It is indeed designed in part as a confirmation and final sealing of the judicial decision made on the entrance of the soul upon its disembodied life; but it contemplates mainly the moral condition and deserts of the race in its totality. It is in a word, that solemn transaction which terminates the career of humanity on earth, and settles judicially its eternal future.

It is indeed impossible for any finite mind to fathom all the reasons for such a transaction: many of these must lie in the divine mind alone, as far beyond human ken as the reasons for the first creation of the race, or the permission of sin, or the providential administration of the world, or the incarnation in the interest of redemption. But we may reverently discern, or discern in part, some of the reasons for this consummating event. As the Sovereign and Father of mankind, God evidently desires to make manifest to all souls the grounds on which his laws, his plans and methods, his actual dealings with the race have been based:—both to convict forever those who have rebelled against his authority and spurned his parental love, and to attach those who have been submissive and dutiful to himself in closer love eternally. God as the Savior of men especially desires that both sinners and saints should more fully comprehend his dispensation of grace, and should thereby be forever either convicted and condemned for their rejection of the Gospel, or more firmly fixed in faith and devotion, world without end. God as the Spirit desires that his modes and measures of gracious influence, his pentecostal outpourings of power, his tender and patient strivings, his final withdrawing from the obdurate soul should be comprehended, so that while those who have yielded to him and been transformed spiritually through his ministries, should become his friends in an eternal covenant of trust and affection, those who have sinned against him and have died in such sin, should see why there is no forgiveness for them either in this world or in the world to come. Comprehensively, the final judgment is intended to be a full review of all the dealings of God with the race, both providential and gracious, from the beginning to the end of the career of humanity on the earth,—to justify him in his administration, and to test the race, individually and collectively, in full view of such manifestation. That such a comprehensive review and adjudication is necessary becomes obvious as soon as the relations of the transaction to the present life as a state of probation are clearly seen. That it is desirable, at least to the righteous, is very manifest; that it will be sublime and momentous beyond all possible conceptions of the human mind—the day for which all other days were made, and on whose action an endless eternity is dependent—our Lord himself has abundantly assured us.

There are some obvious presumptions in favor of the belief that such an adjudication as this will occur. One of these lies, as has already been suggested, in the fact that a state of probation such as that through which both individual men and the race are

passing, requires some definite conclusion, since an unending probation is an absurdity in itself; and also some conclusive explanation of its nature, and the application of that principle of award which the idea of a probation carries within it as an implication. Another lies in the fact that so far as we now are able to discern them, the divine methods in both providence and grace seem to our dim vision but partial and incomplete—calling apparently for some more full and consummating explanation. Neither can there be any satisfactory conception of a moral government over man in which right ultimately triumphs and wrong is ultimately punished, except on the hypothesis of some final rectifying and completing judgment. In a word, both the inherent justice of God as a holy Being, and the nature of his moral relations to man, agree in calling for such a final result as is here contemplated. There are also in the rational mind and conscience what seem like premonitions of such an explaining and consummating transaction, not merely for the individual but for the race—a final day when all spirits shall be confronted with some solemn testing, and shall receive some ultimate destination. But such presumptions alone could not sufficiently confirm and emphasize the truth: what they suggest, the inspired Word decisively affirms. The Old Testament contains many a reference which, studied in the clearer light of the New, corroborates the saying of Daniel that those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall arise, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. The witness of the New Testament is too full and clear to need explanation. The fact is assumed, on the authority of Christ, throughout the later Scriptures, and is in many ways wrought inextricably, as if by a divine hand and purpose, into the very texture of the Christian doctrine. In the presence of such inspired teaching all objections —such as that such a comprehensive adjudication is needless, or that it is undesirable, or that it may be painful even to the saint, inasmuch as it involves an exposure of his earthly weakness and sins—vanish away. In that great day there will be no questioning of the right of God to judge the world, or of the wisdom or the equity or the love that will mark that solemn transaction.

That Christ will be the final Judge, is determined by his own declaration. This is not an expedient devised subsequently to his incarnation and life: he is said in the Conf. to be from all eternity the judge, this being the crowning element in his Messiahship. Nor is he a judge by divine appointment merely: he is also a judge by nature and inherently as divine. There is also a fitness in his sitting thus in judgment, since the supreme

test in the case at least of every soul that has heard the offer of salvation through him, will be its treatment of that gracious offer. As judge he is to wear not the robes of his earthly humiliation, but rather the insignia of his heavenly majesty: he is to be seated on the throne of his sovereignty, and the angels who sang hymns of peace and good will to men at his first advent, are to accompany him in his glorious descent, as in the clouds of heaven, to perform this final act in his Messianic office. His own description of that advent and of the scene of adjudication simply overpowers us: human thought could by no possibility supply anything to such a delineation. The concept is clearly supernatural: man could never have imagined it. It should be added that this divine declaration shuts out decisively the rationalistic notion of the judgment as merely an historic procedure in time, continuous and evolutionary; and also the dogma of two judgments, one at the beginning and the other at the closing of the millennial era. The day may not be a literal day, but it can be neither an indefinitely prolonged period, nor two days many centuries apart.

The persons judged are to be the entire human race: before Him shall be gathered all the nations. The world with all its inhabitants, past or present or future to the end of time, is to face that solemn adjudication. In the language of the Confession (Ch. XXXIII) *all that have lived upon earth* shall appear before the tribunal of Christ. It is also said in this chapter that *the apostate angels shall be judged*, in conjunction with the judgment of humanity,—a statement based on biblical warrant, and implying that the angelic apostacy was not, according to the Miltonic conception, some revolt in heaven long antecedent to the creation of man, but rather a lapse into sin in immediate conjunction with the temptation and fall of our first parents. *Reprobate angels and men* are significantly associated, in the statement (90) of the Larger Catechism. The first reprobate or apostate angel of whom we have any knowledge was that Satan who led our humanity astray in the primeval Paradise, and his share in that revolt against the divine commands, and the share of all other angels associated with him in the corruption of our race, would make it eminently fitting that he and they, together with the human race, should be arraigned at the tribunal of Christ. The ground of their condemnation is nowhere stated, but it may be presumed that it will be the same in kind as that by which humanity are judged. In each and every case, the adjudication will have its basis in character as illustrated in action. The

books, it is said in solemn imagery, will then be opened; the book of divine omniscience and remembrance, the book of providence, the book of the law or the Scriptures, the book of conscience, the book of life or of death; and their several contents will furnish the basis of the adjudication. This adjudication will be equitably conducted, with full recognition of the native capacities, the moral opportunity, the particular light and privilege, in the case of each and every arraigned person. They that have sinned without law, shall be judged without law—according to the measure of their violation of the light and the moral incentives of nature; while as many as have continued in sin notwithstanding their enjoyment of the light and counsel of the Gospel, shall receive, as they will deserve, the greater condemnation. The millions of the heathen world will be treated justly, and with infinite compassion; the greater millions of infancy and childhood will meet with like tenderness; while they who have sinned against larger light and knowledge shall be beaten with many stripes.

The formal issue of this adjudication is revealed to us in unmistakable language by Him who is to act as Judge in that awful day. Angustine intimates (Civ. Dei. XX) that in that hour each soul will spontaneously sit in judgment on itself, and in the presence of Christ will, if it be sinful, pronounce its own doom. But that decision will lie rather in the hand of Christ, and it will be from his lips that the verdict whether of reward or of retribution will be pronounced. And the issue of that solemn assize will be the final separation of the good and the evil—as if angels passed through the vast concourse, assigning to each soul its just place, and executing upon the race as a whole the imperative decree of the righteous judge. The great gulf fixed, which our Lord described in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, is a faint type or suggestion of that ultimate division and separation, immeasurably broader and deeper. All earthly imagery shrinks into nothingness when the attempt is made to utilize it in the delineation of that august hour when the multitudes in that great concourse shall move away from this celestial tribunal, each soul to seek it own place and enter either in joy or in unutterable anguish on the destiny which the Judge of all the earth has assigned it.

The universal teaching of Christian symbolism on this impressive theme is embodied in the language of the earliest creed; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick

and the dead. The Protestant formularies are well represented in the quaint statement of the Scotch Conf. XXV: In the general judgment there shall be given to every man and woman resurrection in the flesh: For the Sea shall give up her dead: the Earth they that therein be inclosed: yea, the Eternal our God shall stretch out his hand on the dust, and the dead shall arise incorruptible and that in the substance of the self-same flesh that every man now beareth, to receive according to their works glory or punishment. The doctrine is in like manner explicitly taught in the Symbols, in conjunction with the revealed fact of an universal resurrection. The incidents of the solemn event are (Ch. XXXIII) vividly depicted. Christ is there to appear in the full and final exercise of his delegated authority as Judge. Apostate angels are then to be judged. All persons that have ever lived on the earth are to present themselves before the great tribunal. All are to give account before the Judge of their thoughts, words and deeds. All are to hear the final decision, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil; the earthly life—not any experience in the intermediate state—determining their character and their destiny. The righteous are said (L. C., 90) to be caught up to Christ in the clouds; to be set on his right hand; *to be openly acknowledged and acquitted;* and finally to be joined with him in the judgment of reprobate men and angels. On the other hand, the wicked (L. C., 89) are said upon clear evidence, and with full conviction of their own consciences, *to be justly convicted and sentenced*, and cast out forever from the favorable presence of God and the glorious fellowship of Christ and his saints. And the end of this solemn procedure is said to be the full manifestation of the glory of the divine mercy in the salvation of the righteous, and the antithetic manifestation of the divine justice in the condemnation of them that obey not God.

13. The Eternal State: Hell and Heaven, nature and duration.

Beyond the transcendent vision of the final judgment, and of the judicial decision which there formally divides the human race on the basis of character and desert into two races fundamentally diverse, inspired Scripture reveals to our view, at least to some extent, the eternal state of both the unholy and the godly, as thus judicially and completely separate. It tells us that the rehabilitation of both classes, having taken place at the resurrection, is the beginning of a new form of existence, which is to be everlasting in dura-

tion, and unfathomable to mortals in its manifold experiences. It tells us that the unholy are not blotted out of life, but rather survive in full consciousness, and probably with powers greatly quickened, although they dwell in an estate of condemnation. It tells us also that the godly are to live on, in the more immediate presence of Deity, and in the enjoyment of most blessed fellowship with one another, with continuous expansion of their finite capacities and spheres of holy activity throughout eternity. Its revelations are indeed clothed, as they must be, in imagery drawn from our earthly life, whether they be descriptive of woe or of blessedness,—yet this imagery, it should be noted, is the strongest, the most vivid and impressive, which that life can supply. And the manner in which such symbolic representations are introduced and used always suggests the momentous truth, that the realities which they seek to represent are in themselves incomparably greater. Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath the heart of man conceived the indescribable verity.

The doctrine that there will finally be a universe of human beings that have passed at the day of judgment into an estate of authoritative and righteous condemnation as a consequence of sinful living on the earth, has been held, painful beyond expression as such a thought must ever be, by the Christian church universally, on the basis of Holy Scripture. It is true, as Bishop Butler has conclusively shown, that belief in some future punishment is a lesson which natural theology clearly teaches, with a strong if not conclusive implication that such punishment may be unending. That distinguished divine maintained that this proposition is a necessary corollary from the unquestionable fact that God is now administering a moral government over man, and over man as sinful—a government which would cease to be government if it contained no provision for punishing transgressors against its holy laws. He explained the present delay in the administration of the penalty which sin as a present fact deserves, by reference to the associated fact that sinners are now living under an economy of grace, with its possibility of repentance and restoration; but held that where this gracious interposition fails in this world, government and equity will have their way in the future life, and will punish righteously so long as the sinfulness lasts—even though it be forever: see also Jackson on Eternal Retribution a Doctrine of Natural Theology.

The argument is intensely solemn in its sweep and conclusiveness. It starts with the unchallengeable premise that sin is not destroyed by the incident of death, but continues to occur in the

intermediate life, and will continue till the judgment. Well says Socrates in the Phaedo: Death is not the end of all, and the wicked is not released from his evil by death; but every one carries with him into the world below that which he is and that which he becomes, and that only. The argument affirms more specifically, that there is a self-perpetuating capacity in sinful as well as in sanctified character, having its baleful laws of growth and its ever-widening aspirations; and that such development in evil may go on, even eternally. It points also to the nature and operations of conscience as a punitive power in the soul during this life—a power which cannot cease with death, but must continue to inflict its chastisement upon the sinner so long as he continues in his sin. It emphasizes the nature and claims of equity as forbidding any compromise with sin, but demanding in the interest of righteousness that all sinfulness shall be punished so long as it exists, even forevermore. It also exalts the moral government of God, with its eternal claim to the loving allegiance of all moral beings, and its just and resistless sentence on all willful transgression, in whatever world or age. It emphasizes the nature of retribution as something imperatively needful as a restraint upon sin, and as becoming more and more necessary as sin increases in volume and malevolence. It points also to the social relations and influence of sin in a vast community where individual sinfulness abounds, and where every tendency may be more and more averse to holiness as the periods of eternity roll on. And finally it rests on the fact that, since all restorative forces fail during this life to arrest sinfulness and make men holy, there is no valid reason to hope that such forces, if they were brought to bear on sinners in another life, would be effective in checking all evil. And the rational inference to be drawn from all these considerations is that, were there no Scripture to reveal the awful fact, sin and its penalty will remain as realities in the moral universe, even forever,—the Bible honestly stating that fact, but in no sense giving it existence.

Yet the witness of Scripture is as clear, earnest, conclusive as language can make it, in the form of both direct affirmations and negative or indirect declarations, and also of general statements and inferences—all so numerous and explicit that it seems almost impossible to interpose candid question or challenge. It is a just remark (Shedd, Hist. Doct.) that in proportion as the inspiration and infallibility of Revelation have been conceded, the doctrine of an absolute and therefore endless punishment of sin has maintained itself in the Christian church,—it being impossible, as the

author says, to eliminate the tenet from the Scriptures, except by some mutilation of the Canon or some violently capricious exegesis. In multiplied ways the Bible describes, first, the ground of future punishment as seen in the sin of the race : secondly, the nature of that punishment as adapted to the constitution of the sinner, and both privative and positive in its aspects : thirdly, the laws that control its administration, in the application of penalty to the various grades and measures of sinfulness manifest : fourthly, its severity as an expression of the feeling of God in view of such sin in whatever form, and specifically in the crowning form of willful rejection of his grace in Christ : and fifthly, its duration as endless in time—complete and everlasting. These are the spontaneous conclusions of those who study the sacred writings on this subject with candid mind, and without preconceived theories. It may be added that those who hold to such conclusions would rejoice as heartily as any if the Word of God were found on fair investigation to disclose any other or brighter view ; but they reverently accept the doctrine, with all the mystery and awfulness of it, simply because that Word so unquestionably teaches it. And they further regard it as one of the evidences that the Scriptures have come to us from God, that they speak so clearly and faithfully on this solemn theme, on the authority of a Being who knows the exact truth in the case, and who loves our sinful humanity too well to conceal it.

Turning away from this painful vision, we are confronted at once on the authority of the same Scriptures with glimpses of the reality and the splendor and the holiness of that vast universe of human beings whom Christ has in his final adjudication pronounced worthy, and assigned a place with himself in the heavenly Kingdom of God. Some noticeable differences become at once apparent. The ground of that assignment is made even more clear : the nature of its awards is more distinctly revealed : the laws that rule in its gracious administration are set forth in more glorious coloring ; its blessedness is more fully defined, and its duration is declared to be as endless as the existence of God. The inspired Word says almost nothing respecting the associations experienced in the universe of evil, but dwells with tender interest on the communion of the saints in glory. It says almost nothing about the occupations of the lost, but recounts with enthusiasm the employments of the saved—their ceaseless praises before the throne, their ministries to one another, their eager discharge of whatever services God may require. It says almost nothing about the evolution of sin within the breast of the con-

demned sinner, or the dark developments of evil in the society of the condemned; but celebrates in advance the growth of the redeemed in knowledge, their increase in holiness, their moral development into equality with the angels that have never sinned. The same faithful Word which brings to us the revelation of the universe of evil and requires us to accept that revelation on the authority of him who inspired that Word, brings to us also this sublime vision of the universe of good, and permits us to receive and welcome it, not simply as an article of faith, but as a blessed verity of grace, given to us and to all men as an inspiration to a life of obedience and holiness on earth. We have in fact no more reason for believing in the fact of heaven than for believing in the fact of hell; the same Scriptures which reveal the one, reveal also the other; both facts rest on the same foundation; yet over the abyss of hell there rest eternal shadows, while on the summits of heaven eternal sunshine, everlasting glory, abides.

It is not within the scope of this Lecture to discuss these solemn topics at length, or to present the proofs of these antithetic truths as fully as they deserve. Both doctrines are alike incorporated in the very structure of Christianity, and neither of them can be torn out without impairing and endangering that structure throughout. To set aside the biblical teaching respecting hell involves the subversion of a large proportion of what is taught in the Scriptures on one hand in respect to sin and law and government, and on the other respecting Christ and the redemption which he came into our world to offer to mankind. Even the inspiration and infallibility of the Divine Word are called in question by such a procedure,—as is evident from the fact that the rejection of this doctrine has quite generally been accompanied by characteristic indifference, or at least by lack of positive loyalty, to the Bible viewed as an authoritative and final message from God to our lost race. It is the just remark of an eminent authority that though this be a solemn, alarming, fearful truth, yet to hold it is essential to the integrity of the whole system of faith, and to the taking Scripture as the supreme rule of faith. To set aside the scriptural teaching respecting hell requires that one should set aside the corresponding teaching respecting heaven, and the immortal life of purity and blessedness there centered,—in that process sweeping out of sight some of the strongest incentives to a life of holy obedience on earth. This has in all ages been apparent to the Christian church; and it is significant that after eighteen centuries of investigation that church in all its best types, and even in its more degenerate types also,

is now substantially agreed as to the reality and the nature and the duration of both hell and heaven, and also as to the divinely established relation between these two antithetic universes and the kind of life which men are living in this preparatory world.

The Protestant creeds are entirely one in their affirmations touching these truths, from the Confession of Augsburg down to the Symbols of Westminster. It will be sufficient to note here the strong and solemn language of these Symbols. Their descriptions of the permanent estate into which the righteous and the wicked are respectively assigned by Christ as their Judge, are both positive and impressive in the highest degree. Appropriating the awful language of the Bible itself, they affirm that *the souls of the wicked are cast into hell*, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day. This fate is declared to be an inevitable consequence of sin, whereby the sinner is bound over to the wrath of God, and made subject not only to death, but to unspeakable miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal. The same solemn truth is emphasized in the chapter on the law of God as a rule of life. In the Larger Catechism, it is said (29, 86) that sin is punished in the world to come by everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and by the judicial imposition of grievous torments in soul and body, and that without intermission. Terrible as such language seems, the Symbols simply repeat here the utterances of Scripture, and especially of the Savior himself, from whose faithful lips these declarations have fallen as a solemn warning against all sin. And when they add that such punishment is without end, and so pronounce the estate of the wicked a fixed and changeless estate, they are only repeating again the teaching of him who said: Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.

Concerning the righteous the Symbols in graphic and glowing language declare that the condition into which they are judicially introduced at death, is one of corresponding felicity, instant, complete, eternal. They tell us (L. C., 86) in words already quoted, that this condition is one of communion with Christ in glory; that the righteous enter on the enjoyment of such communion immediately after death; that their souls are at once made perfect in holiness, and are received into the highest heavens, and that they are permitted there to behold the face of God in light and glory, while they wait for the full redemption of their bodies at the resurrection. The same terms are employed in the Confession, with an additional emphasis upon the im-

mediateness of this wonderful transition. While it is intimated that after the resurrection and the final judgment there will come to the righteous a certain fullness of joy and refreshing from the presence of the Lord, not before attainable even in heaven, it is declared that true perfection in holiness is attained when death relieves the soul from the last taint and trace of evil. In this life the will of the saint is said to act but imperfectly, but in that estate of glory that will is said to be made at once perfectly and immutably free to good—as immutably and perfectly free as it can be after the resurrection and the final judgment.

The specific descriptions of Hell and Heaven in the Symbols are remarkable, among all the symbolic statements of Protestantism, on one side for their strict scripturalness in form, and on the other for their earnest emphasizing of unholiness as constituting the basis of all the misery of the lost, and of holiness as the basis of all the felicity of the saved. While the strong physical or material imagery of the Bible is retained in both directions, the element of character as evil or good, undeserving or worthy, is made the central element in their vivid delineations. The ground of all that is affirmed respecting the awful estate of the wicked is said to lie in the fact that they know not God, that they obey not the Gospel, that they are reprobate toward both love and grace; their sin, in a word, is their ruin, not only during the intermediate state, but in the final judgment and forever. So the felicity of the righteous is said to lie not merely in their being received into the highest heavens, but in their completed sanctification and perfection, and in their being permitted like the angels that have never sinned, to behold the face of God in light and glory. The language is transcendently beautiful. The redeemed are (L. C., 90) fully and forever freed from all sin and misery; they are filled with inconceivable joys; they are made perfectly holy and happy in both soul and body, in the company of innumerable saints and angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, to all eternity. The conception of character runs through the entire representation. The saints in glory are happy in this ineffable degree because they are holy. Character rather than condition is primal, and their condition is what it is because they are what they are. This fact is worthy of just recognition, especially by those who incline to criticise the severities of speech manifest in the Symbols, when they describe the torments of the lost. Like Christ himself, they rest every affirmation on the basis of character as tested at the judgment.

14. The Ultimate Consummation: the Kingdom surrendered: God supreme.

The Confession is closed (XXXIII: iii) with an impressive injunction that we ought to be persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both *to deter all men from sin*, and also for *the greater consolation of the godly* in their adversity. It further teaches that Christ will have that day *unknown to men*, that they may shake off all carnal security and *be always watchful*, because they know not at what hour the Lord may come; and may ever be prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. This sentence was designed simply to confirm our faith in the certainty of a day of judgment, and to urge us to thoughtfulness and fidelity in view of the fact that to any one of us judgment may come at any hour. It is by no means to be regarded as teaching dogmatically that the final coming of Christ to be the Judge of mankind is imminent, and is therefore to be constantly watched and waited for. It is rather a personal exhortation furnishing a fitting close to the entire creed, than a doctrinal affirmation framed to sustain some type of millennarian belief. The sentence has its counterpart in the closing words of the Belgic Conf: We expect that great day with a most ardent desire, to the end that all may fully enjoy the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

But have we in the Symbols, or in other Protestant formularies, any statement respecting what may lie beyond the resurrection and judgment, and the entrance of our race on an immortal life such as has just been described? Calvin regards the judgment as the final act of Christ as the incarnate God—his Messiahship, which began with the first, culminating in the second advent, with its concomitant events. Melancthon somewhere says that Christ will at the judgment finish finally his work as Mediator, but will continue to reign as God, revealing the Deity to the universe immediately and eternally. The Scotch Conf. (XXV) declares that after Christ shall have completed the judgment, he shall render up the kingdom to God his Father, who then shall be, and ever shall remain in all things, God blessed forever. The Irish Articles (104) say that when the last judgment is finished, Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to his Father, and God shall be all in all. These statements simply reproduce in substance the remarkable declaration of Paul in that sublime chapter wherein he endeavors to describe through earthly imagery the mystery of the resurrection,—the declaration not only that Christ will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father, but that he himself will also be subject (or subject himself) to him that put all things

under him, even death as the last enemy, in order that God may be all in all—the All in all things. We are not to infer from this mysterious statement that the Son as the second person in the holy Trinity becomes henceforth subordinate to the Father as the first person: but rather that, as the Son of man, our Lord closes up at this point his glorious Messiahship—not as by compulsion, but with an ineffable willingness and joy, while the multitude of the heavenly host sing hosannas over the glorious consummation of the kingdom of grace.

Neither are we to understand that God the Father now assumes alone the government of the spiritual universe,—the Son, and the Holy Spirit also, being henceforth retired from active connection with the future experiences of either the saved or the lost, or of the angelic world. Obviously it is the complete Deity who is henceforth to become the all in all throughout that universe, yet not in any such sense as retires or terminates thereafter the Trinity in the divine constitution. The Messiah finishes his mediatorial work, and is no longer to act in that capacity; he has at this point established the kingdom—the divine sovereignty—on eternal foundations, and ceases therefore to wield that special authority which was vested in him as our Mediator. The great transaction in which the human race has been involved through sin terminates with the final judgment; the vast experiment of grace and of atoning and redeeming love has been successfully made; the career of humanity is finished; and God, Father and Son and Spirit, is now seen, as the curtain slowly falls, to be the supreme and absolute Deity, ruling in indescribable majesty and glory over the entire universe of spiritual being.

One other event already alluded to, mysterious and perhaps inexplicable to mortals, is that which is described in the Belgic Conf. (XXXVII) as burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it. We recall at once the graphic and terrifying declaration of Peter, that the heavens and the earth are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment,—that in that day the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and pass away,—that the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up,—that the very elements (or heavenly bodies) shall melt away with fervent heat. And with this startling description we at once associate the statement of the Apostle, derived from David and Isaiah and seconded in the closing portion of the Apocalypse, respecting new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, to follow after this sweeping and dissolving conflagration. Dorner suggests (Syst. Doct.) that such a conflagration does not imply

annihilation but rather purification—the erasing of all traces of sin in the form and material of the world. He adds the striking surmise that without any loss of substantiality matter may in this process exchange its darkness, hardness, heaviness, immobility and impenetrableness for clearness, radiance, elasticity and transparency. It certainly is not strange that in view of the biblical statements, it should be held, more as a hope than as an assured belief, that there will come through this fiery process such a transformation and rehabilitation of the earth as shall make it a worthy abode for the multitude of the righteous, now themselves purged so as by the fires of the judgment, and dwelling again in such bodies as would befit such a purified world. It is said that there would be eminent appropriateness in making what had been the scene of sin and of redemption, the scene also of triumph and of endless bliss for the redeemed race. It is said that the fact of the resurrection and restoration of a bodily life, and the natural aptitudes of the purified body for such a form of life as this cleansed earth would provide, furnishes a distinct presumption in favor of such a hope. In the phrase of Augustine, (Civ. Dei. XX) as the world itself is renewed through conflagration to some better thing, it is fitly accommodated to men, themselves renewed in their flesh to some better thing. It is urged that such an arrangement would, in various ways, be peculiarly grateful to righteous humanity, and that God may thus create for that humanity a Paradise on this earth far more glorious than the first Eden—which would become a heaven through transcendent disclosures to the redeemed of his abounding love, his immeasurable perfections. Yet such presumptions are to be entertained with caution, —especially in view of the opposite opinion, sometimes held, that this flaming orb may become the abode of the lost, (Edwards, Hist. of Redemption) or of the third hypothesis, more frequently received, that after having subserved its purpose as the temporary home of the human race, it may become henceforth forever uninhabitable—a consumed planet swinging in silence through the the sky forever. It is enough for us to know that God has all spheres, places, conditions throughout the universe at his command, and that he will be sure to locate the redeemed in that abode, wherever it be, which will be best fitted to secure their perpetual holiness and their everlasting bliss.

LECTURE FIFTEENTH—THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY: CHARACTER, WORK, INFLUENCE.

ESTIMATES OF THE ASSEMBLY: ITS WORK REVIEWED: SPECIFIC EXCELLENCES AND DEFECTS: AUTHORITY OF THE SYMBOLS—TOLERATION: CONTINENTAL RELATIONS AND INFLUENCE: THEIR PERMANENCY AND PROPAGATION: RULE OF SUBSCRIPTION: REVISION: FINAL WORD.

1. Estimates of the Assembly: its general character.

Clarendon in his History of the Rebellion speaks of the Westminster Assembly and its work in terms of partisan bitterness, saying among other things that, with the exception of a few very reverend and learned men appointed by authority of the House of Lords, there were not twenty members of the body who were not declared and avowed enemies of the Church of England; many of them infamous in their lives and conversations, and most of them of very mean parts in learning, if not of scandalous ignorance, and of no other reputation than of malice to the Church of England;—so that, as he affirms, that convention hath not produced anything that might not have been reasonably expected from it. Hallam in his Constitutional History of England, while denouncing what he describes as the remorseless and indiscriminate bigotry of Presbyterianism during the brief period of its exaltation in Britain, speaks more accurately of the manner in which the Assembly was appointed by Parliament, and more kindly of the abilities if not of the temper of the body. Though this Assembly, he remarks, showed abundance of bigotry and narrowness, they were by no means so contemptible as Clarendon represents them; and perhaps were equal in learning, goodness and other merits to any lower House of Convocation that ever made a figure in England. Masson (Life of Milton) affirms that Parliament made the most suitable selection in its power, from the most popular Puritan divines it could hear of throughout England, and with an endeavor to distribute the selection so far as possible among the several counties;—and the name and residence and known standing of a large proportion of the

members, so far as recorded, certainly justify his statement. The arrogant criticisms of Milton have already been noted in part. He speaks contemptuously of the Assembly as not chosen by any rule or custom ecclesiastical, nor eminent for any zeal or knowledge above those left out; and in unmeasured language condemns them because of the fact that, after they had cried down with great zeal the avarice and pluralities of bishops and prelates, they—as he alleges—showed even greater boldness in grasping after places of profit and influence. The bitterness of his criticism is largely explained by the fact that Palmer, one of the leading divines of the Assembly, while preaching before Parliament, had denounced the unfortunate treatise of Milton on Divorce as a wicked book, abroad and uncensured, though deserving to be burnt; and by the further fact that Milton himself, undoubtedly through the influence of the Assembly, had been brought to account for this treatise before the House of Commons, and had narrowly escaped public censure.

More favorable estimates are abundant. The Dissenting Brethren, as they were kindly termed,—members of the Assembly who disagreed in matters of polity rather than doctrine, — while emphasizing and justifying their differences, spoke publicly (Apologetical Narration) of the body as comprising many able, learned and grave divines,—an assembly, as they said, where much of the piety, wisdom and learning of two kingdoms were met in one. Baxter, who knew well the leading minds in the Assembly, while speaking frankly of his dissent in judgment as to matters of church government and to certain clauses in the doctrinal Symbols, praised the divines of Westminster as men of eminent learning and ability and of godliness also, and declared that in his opinion the Christian world since the days of the Apostles had never a synod of more excellent divines, taking one thing with another, than this and the Synod of Dort were.* Hetherington,

*On the base of the statue erected recently at Kidderminster in honor of Baxter are recorded the words: In a stormy and divided age he advocated unity and comprehension. At its dedication Dean Stanley spoke of the real greatness of his character as a lover of peace and unity, and of the noble memories of him as such that have survived through the ages. The key to his mediate and conciliating theological position is well illustrated in the quaint title page to his chief theological treatise:

Catholick Theologie: Plain, Pure, Peaceable: for Pacification of the Dogmatical Word-Warriors. . . . . Written chiefly for posterity, when sad experience hath taught me to hate Theological Logical Wars, and to love, and seek, and call for Peace. This treatise consists of three books: I. Pacifying Principles; II. A Pacifying Praxis, or Dialogue; III. Pacifying Disputations against some Real Errors. Its fitting motto is *Ex Bello Pax.*

who ranks as the first elaborate historian of the Assembly, claims with some exaggeration that it was composed of the great master minds of the age,—that its theological and ecclesiastical products were of the highest value to Christianity,—and that it has exerted and will continue to exert a very wide influence upon the civil and religious history of mankind. Stoughton (Ecclesiastical History of England) testifies that the members of the Assembly had learning enough and to spare,—all solid, substantial and ready for use ; and adds a laudatory estimate of their remarkable perception and advocacy of what is most characteristic and fundamental in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The unique encomium of Thomas Manton in his striking Preface to the Confession has already been quoted. Later historians such as Schaff and Mitchell are more discriminating in their estimates ; but while unhesitating in the recognition of faults and failures, are equally conclusive in their general commendation. The comparison between the Assembly and the Synod of Dort, suggested by Baxter, must give the advantage to the former, whether either the numbers in attendance, the time given to deliberation, the scope of the inquiries and results, or the impression made upon the age and on succeeding ages, be taken into account. That Synod was indeed more general, more ecumenical in a sense, as including representatives from most of the Reformed, though of course none from the Lutheran communions ; it may also have been, as Schaff claims, equal to that of Westminster in learning and moral weight ; but in the aggregate of what was accomplished and in the results attained, it was obviously inferior. It is certain that no continental synod of the sixteenth century, or antecedent assembly of divines in Great Britain, equaled either in importance ; nor has any subsequent synod or council been held within the limits of Protestantism, whose products and whose influence have been so extensive or so valuable.

It is not needful to repeat here what was said in the opening Lecture respecting the individual members of the assembly, the manner of their appointment and their support, their organization and method of procedure, their rules and requisitions, the illustrious Jerusalem Chamber in which they met, or the number of their sessions and the long stretch of time during which they sat so patiently and labored so earnestly in putting into form the lofty yet impracticable scheme of establishing one national church for the British realm,—a church with a distinct system of doctrine, a fixed polity, and a definite mode of worship, such as in their earnest judgment the land and the age required. Nor is it

necessary to refer further to the specific difficulties which confronted them in their arduous task,—the struggle with the illicit assumptions of Parliament, the obstructions interposed by the Independent party, the rise of numerous sects and heresies, the internal embarrassments of various sorts, which during their protracted period of service stood more and more in their way.

If it were practicable, it would be interesting to contemplate the Assembly more at length in its historical setting and relations; —to pass in review its vital connections with the antecedent developments of British Protestantism from the age of Henry VIII, and also with much of the civil history of Britain during the hundred years preceding its convocation;—to call to mind also the diversified movements of the developing Protestantism of the continent during this period, and study the amazing revolution in belief and experience which occurred throughout northern Europe between the age of Luther and Calvin and the memorable day when the Assembly held its opening session in the beautiful Chapel of Henry VII. It would also be interesting, if we could contemplate the Assembly in its living connections with the other great Christian Councils from the era of Nicæa and Constantinople down to the memorable Council of Trent,—if we could compare its doctrinal products more specifically with those of others in that illustrious series, and estimate comprehensively its relative bearings upon the subsequent theology and faith of Christendom. Such comparative studies, if they did not stir us to special and reverent admiration, would at least make manifest to us the emptiness of much of the derogatory criticism which in earlier and in later times has been heaped upon that memorable body. It would also demonstrate the fact that, if indeed the Westminster divines were not individually notable, as unfriendly critics have alleged, the Assembly itself was great,—great in the magnitude and elevation of its aims, great in the specific work which it accomplished, and great in the influence it has exerted, and is still exerting, alike upon the religious beliefs and upon the moral activities of millions who in various lands speak the English tongue.

2. Work of the Assembly: general review.

Turning from the Assembly itself to a general estimate of the work done by it, we may properly confine our attention substantially to its doctrinal products.—Its Directory for Worship was not imposed as a strict liturgy or formal rule in public devotions, whose observance in all particulars was

to be required thereafter from the Presbyterian ministry. That formulary was intended, like the Directory of Henderson from which it was largely derived, to instruct and guide rather than to govern, and as such it has proved its value by the salutary effect it has had, and still has, in securing both spiritual uniformity and spiritual liberty in the worship of the sanctuary. Departures from its wise and moderate counsels have been rare in any age, and have been followed generally by willing return to its faithful guidance. Substantial obedience to it has preserved the Presbyterian ministry and churches from the tendency to ritualism, with its despiritualizing formalities, and as well from the antithetic tendency to excessive enthusiasm and lack of due form in devotion, which have characterized some other Protestant communions. It has been urged, with some force indeed, that the Presbyterian mode of worship is too sedate, too cold, too uninspiring or uplifting to meet the real needs of the soul; and it may be true that Presbyterian churches have at times lost, through such characteristic features in their devotions, some proportion of the power they might have exerted upon the popular mind. Yet to the vast majority of thoughtful and devout persons, the Presbyterian mode is quite as acceptable as either those modes which are more strictly liturgical or ritualistic, or those which are more demonstrative and impassioned in expression. It has stood for more than two centuries, and still stands, as an acceptable medium between forms of worship more or less extreme, and which are severally marked by obvious defects as well as by special excellencies. And it may be added as a closing suggestion on this point that, if Presbyterian ministers feel the need of improvement or of increased power in their conduct of public devotions, they will probably find the help they desire, not so much in the imitation of any more enthusiastic usages, or in the restoration of some strict ritual, but rather in the more careful study and observance of the instructions given by the Assembly—instructions almost as well fitted to our time as to the age and country in which they were first promulgated.

Nor is it needful to consider again the excellences or the defects of that Form of Government and Discipline which the Assembly after long deliberation prepared for the British churches. We may regret the strong tendency of the body to a jure divino claim for the polity which it framed: we may admit the deficiency apparent in that polity, and emphasize the changes which especially on this continent have been made in it: we may also freely acknowledge the existence of some dangerons elements,

such as the tendency to severe ecclesiasticism or to undue centralization of power, which seem indeed inherent in the system, and which are always to be guarded against in the interest of spiritual liberty. It may also be true that the Presbyterianism of this age or of coming ages will discover by experiment the need of still further improvement or modification in order to protect the church from perils of this class—perils which nothing but practical experiment can either bring into light or indicate a way for safe correction. And he is the wisest and truest friend, not merely of those who are governed under this polity but of the polity itself, who is ever on the watch against the liability to such perversions. Still, after two centuries and a half of experience in various countries and under widely diverse conditions, the Presbyterian mode of government, generically considered, has proved itself worthy of cordial acceptance and of loyal support as, if not the best, at least one among the best types of church administration which the wisdom of Christian men, guided by the fundamental principles of the New Testament, and by the usages of the Apostolic church, so far as these are known, have been able thus far to devise. That polity harmonizes well with the Presbyterian system of doctrine and with the prevailing type of religious experience among Presbyterians; it also harmonizes well with what we regard as the best forms of political government through elect representation; and in practice it is found to harmonize well with individual rights on the one hand, and with the highest welfare of the general organism on the other. As such it meets with public favor now, and seems likely to meet with public favor through coming centuries. And it may properly be added here that much of the current criticism upon it, and much of the disposition to revolt against even the just and gracious administration of it, is little better than a revolt against all right regulations within the sphere of doctrine and order, if it be not indeed a sub-conscious rebellion against any and all modes of organized government within the household of faith.

Without dwelling further upon either the worship or the polity of Presbyterianism as they were formulated at Westminster, or as they now exist in the various Presbyterian communions, we may direct our thoughts exclusively to the theological labors and the doctrinal products of the Assembly. Here careful account should be taken once more of the men themselves,—specially with reference to their qualifications for their great task. It is not needful to claim with some eulogists that they were men of unparalleled genius, divinely equipped with something like

inspiration for their high service,—men too profound and vast in their knowledge to be contradicted or even to be comprehended by the intellect of later ages. Nor is it wise or just to join with Clarendon and Milton in decrying them as unscholarly, ignorant, or intellectually narrow and incompetent,—below even the highest level of their own era and country, and quite unfit therefore to influence largely the theological opinions of subsequent times. The latter view certainly cannot be held by any one who considerately reads the story of their labors, and fairly measures what they actually did in the way of expressing clearly and forcibly the best doctrinal beliefs, the best spiritual experiences, of their own age. Milton himself at one time spoke of them as a venerable body in which piety, learning and prudence—as he said—were housed. As to general qualifications and equipment, they were obviously up to the best standards of their time: Protestantism in that age certainly had nowhere, either in Britain or on the Continent, abler or worthier representatives. It has been alleged that they were mere echoes of continental thought—mere copyists of continental symbolism. But their debates show beyond all doubt that they were independent students of the Bible and of Christian doctrine; and were much more anxious to know the truth than to conform to any human standards of belief. It is not to be denied that they were subject to the limitations of their times,—limitations of various sorts, which often embarrassed both their thinking and their speech. The atmosphere they breathed was far from favorable: clouds and darkness sometimes overshadowed both their mental and their spiritual vision. The record in the Minutes of the sermons of Reynolds and of gracious little Palmer, as he was called by Baillie, delivered on a solemn day of fasting in the critical autumn of 1645, show how oppressive their consciousness of the difficulties besetting them at times became. Yet it is clear that by force of character and purpose they rose to the full level of their occasion, and did their work at least as well as any body of men in Protestant Christendom in that age could have done it.

One special advantage which they possessed above any who had labored before them in the task of casting the faith of Protestantism into symbolic form, may once more be mentioned, though it has been a matter of occasional reference heretofore. That advantage lay in the fact that they had in their hands, not only all the antecedent creeds in Britain from the first Scotch Confession down to the Articles of Ussher and the Irish Synod, but also most if not every one of the continental formularies

which could be in any way helpful to them in shaping their own Symbols. As early as 1577, the question of a new creed to be adopted by all branches of Protestantism, as an authorized representative of the common faith, was earnestly discussed on the continent, and in this interest a number of prominent divines compiled the important volume entitled the Harmony of the Confessions of Faith of the Christian and Reformed Churches. This volume contained, under appropriate heads of doctrine, quotations from eleven of the most conspicuous creeds, Lutheran as well as Reformed. An English translation was immediately made and published at Cambridge, 1586; and a second edition was printed in London in 1643. This edition was doubtless in the hands of the Assembly at the outset of its deliberations, and unquestionably stimulated its members in the desire to compile not merely a British but an ecumenical creed, in whose teachings Protestantism universally might rest. And there are numerous evidences that, animated by this desire, they were inclined to adhere as closely as possible to the doctrine, and to adopt substantially the language of these earlier creeds, wherever this was found practicable.

They were of course familiar with the writings of English martyrs like Hooper and Cranmer and Latimer, and of British divines like Knox and Melville, Cartwright and Ussher. They also had in their possession the writings, not only of Luther and Melancthon, Calvin and Beza, but also of those who had followed these great leaders in the construction or the development of either the Lutheran or the Reformed theology on the continent. The literature which Socinianism and other heresies had produced, was likewise at their command. They had doubtless studied the decrees and canons of the famous Council of Trent, and were familiar with the current doctrine of Rome. At least one of their number had been a member of the Synod of Dort, and the clear and strong statements of that Synod on the five points of Calvinism had been well studied, as the phraseology of the Symbols plainly shows. It should be specially remembered that, notwithstanding the prominence given by many English divines to the Augsburg Confession and to Lutheranism generally, as being more closely allied to the Episcopal creed and mode, the influence of Calvin was evidently predominant above all others. His occasional letters to the ecclesiastical and the civil authorities respecting Protestant interests in England, though resented by some as an improper interference, were widely regarded as weighty and valuable contributions to the general cause of the

Reformation. His Institutes had long been in use in the universities, and some of his Commentaries had been translated for English readers. His masterful personality had thus made itself felt almost as much across the channel as in the States of northern Europe, and the Assembly had learned to recognize the cogency and worth of his theological system. How great was the advantage of possessing such a mass of helpful material, and how diligently and thoughtfully that material was studied and utilized, it is easy for us even at this distance to discern. At no date prior to the fifth decade of the seventeenth century could any body of men, though equally large in number or great in ability, have had such resources or such an opportunity to formulate a creed fitted to command interest and secure approval wherever Protestantism prevailed. Nor indeed was there ever any subsequent hour in the history of the Christian church of various names and tendencies in Britain, when the necessity for such a creed could have arisen, or when such a creed, however desired, could have been framed. The one preponderant moment came, and the Symbols had their birth by a conjunction which was nothing less than providential.

That the Assembly realized that such a critical moment had come, and girded itself to meet the exigency in a spirit befitting such a conjunction, is apparent to any student of the Minutes or of contemporaneous records, so far as these were written in any mood of consideration or of candor. There are those, even at this late day, who denounce the Assembly as a band of shrewd and energetic men who saw or thought they saw an opportunity to push both their doctrine and themselves into ecclesiastical and political ascendency, and who were animated by partisan or selfish or dogmatic incentives in all that they did. It is not indeed to be questioned that earthly influences of various sorts crept occasionally into their minds, and in some degree affected their conduct in the peculiar emergency in which they were placed. Even inspired men are described in Holy Writ as at times wrought upon by such lower incentives, while engaged in discharging some holy trust for God or his church. But there are many evidences, not merely in their formal avowals before the English people, but in their daily fellowship and discussions, in their prayers and discourses, and in their solemn days of fasting and devotion, to show that the Westminster divines sincerely believed themselves to be called of God to a task of transcendent importance, and were conscious of working directly under the divine eye, and under supreme responsibility to the great Head of the church, and to

him only, for what they should endeavor to do in his name. The impressive covenant with which each one of them commenced his share in that work, binding himself to maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what he believed to be most agreeable to the Word of God, or in point of discipline but what might make most for his glory and the peace and good of his church, was not an empty form, but the expression of sincere conviction and of honest and unswerving purpose. Nor is it too much to believe that the Holy Spirit not only moved them individually to make such a sacred pledge, but guided and strengthened them collectively in the endeavor to keep it. We may fitly recognize in their experience, if not a special movement of Providence or of the Spirit in a form resembling miracle, still a signal illustration of that divine superintendence which is ever hovering over and graciously guiding the earthly church. And in the largest and best sense their work, having been thus divinely regulated and sanctified, follows and will follow them in spite of all detraction through the ages.

3. Characteristic excellences of their work; extent, order, proportion, moderation; spiritual and ethical quality.

More specific examination of their work in the department of doctrine will bring before us some characteristics of it which should command especial attention in this closing review. And first, its extent and comprehensiveness. The Second Helvetic Confession, first prepared by Bullinger as a personal declaration of faith, but subsequently more widely adopted than any among the Symbols of the Reformed churches, and which bears, as has been said, the character of a theological treatise rather than a formulary of belief, is by far the most lengthy of the Protestant creeds. It is in fact about twice as long as the Confession of Westminster, though not longer than that Confession with the two Catechisms added. The Formula of Concord is also a little longer than the Confession; but all the other continental creeds are shorter,—the Belgic Conf. and the Heidelberg Catechism about two-thirds, and the French Conf. and Thirty-Nine Articles less than half its length. Several of these formularies, like the Symbols, include more or less fully the three divisions of doctrine and polity and worship; but no one of them supplies any such exposition of Christian ethics as is contained in the Larger Catechism, nor can we find in any of them so elaborate an exposition of saving faith, of acceptable prayer, of the Christian life in general, or even of the church. Schaff pro-

nounces the Second Helvetic Conf. the first among the Reformed in respect to theological quality, as indeed it excels all the Lutheran symbols in this particular; but he further admits that in logical clearness and precision it is surpassed (indeed greatly surpassed) by the Confession of Westminster. The latter is not only more exact and clear; it is far more comprehensive and more practical than its Swiss rival: it includes more topics, and more tersely and fully defines the topics of which it treats. It also represents not only the broadened and clarified vision of the Saxon mind and of the seventeenth century, but in a remarkable degree anticipates the evolution of Christian doctrine in subsequent periods, even down to our own times,—occasionally reaching out beforehand by a species of prescience, and giving expression to divine truth in forms which meet with wonderful fitness the issues and questions, the heresies and the unbeliefs of more recent ages.

It has been objected, with some force, that the Symbols are too extensive and too elaborate to subserve well the proper uses of a church creed. There would be grave weight in the objection if these Symbols were in any way imposed upon private persons as a condition of church membership, or if they were imposed on the ministry of the church in every particular and in each sentence and expresssion. But it should be remembered that private members of Presbyterian churches are not required to avow or accept these doctrinal formularies, but simply to assent to the fundamental facts and tenets of the common Christianity. And as to official acceptation, American Presbyterianism, as early as 1729, drew a broad line of distinction between the essential and necessary articles in the Confession—those which give character and quality to it as both an evangelical and a Calvinistic document,—and other articles which are not necessary or essential, and which may be held or not held, without impairing the integrity of the general system of doctrine. On the basis of this distinction, American Presbyterianism has usually granted just and sufficient liberty to its ministry and eldership as official persons. It ought not to be inferred, however, that those articles which are neither primary nor fundamental, are therefore of no value in the system of which they form a part. In these studies we have again and again had occasion to note the worth of such secondary elements, both in excluding minor error, and in enforcing instruction respecting specific truth and duty. It is hard to tell just where a statement apparently secondary or incidental may assume an unexpected prominence in its bearings on belief or action. And if the effort were made, as has been proposed, to

eliminate all such subordinate elements, and to reduce the Confession to what is deemed essential or necessary only, the procedure would probably be unsuccessful: it might even occur that, in tearing out these more delicate nerves and ganglia, the whole creed would be disintegrated or destroyed.

A second special characteristic appears in the elaborate order and the fine proportion of doctrine exhibited in the Symbols. Attention has been frequently directed in these studies to the stately advance from one topic to another, and from one class or group of topics to another, until the conclusion of the whole is reached in the two chapters which treat of the eschatological doctrines. This order is in general that of the antecedent creeds, and especially those among them which are theological, like the Second Helvetic Conf. rather than religious and practical, like the Catechism of Heidelberg. It is also the order observed in most theological treatises of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though some authorities followed rather the example of Calvin in constructing their systems on the basis of the three ancient creeds—especially the first. In the Confession, as we have already observed, a solid foundation is first laid in the doctrine respecting the Scriptures, respecting God in his being and activities, and respecting man in his original constitution, his fall, and his corruption in sin. On this broad basis, the great central doctrine concerning Christ and his mediation, with all that is involved in the conception of salvation through him, is reared. Then follows logically, as we have seen, the experience of salvation in all the phases of it made apparent in the Christian life; and this is succeeded by the exposition of the divine law, set forth as the rule of godly living, and applied in certain relationships of the believer to others and to human society. This in turn is followed by the comprehensive doctrine respecting the Christian church, its nature and organization and officers, its sacraments and ordinances and authority as the representative household and kingdom of Christ on earth; and the whole is concluded with the particular doctrines grouped under the head of eschatology. Such is the order, quiet and firm and impressive, in the Confession; and in the Catechisms we may discern a similar order, though somewhat differently stated in view of their more immediate aim as practical and educational expositions. It may be added that while this, as has been said, is the order of several of the antecedent creeds, in none of them is this order so elaborately and skillfully followed.

The Minutes show that special consideration was given to the

matter of proportion as well as order,—involving the amount of space to be given to each topic or group of topics presented, and involving also the relation and adjustment of each part and section to all the rest. If there be disproportion or superfluity anywhere, it will be found in the large chapter on the eternal Decree, or that on the Covenants, or in those which treat of Oaths and Vows and Marriage, and the Civil Magistracy. The statements respecting Christ and Salvation, in the various aspects of these central and most vital themes, could hardly be condensed into smaller space, nor could much be done to reduce the chapters on the Church and its institutions and ordinances, without doing serious damage to the essential doctrine. It would indeed be hard to find a really superfluous sentence or clause anywhere in either the Confession or the Shorter Catechism, although Blunt (Dict. of Sects) with hardly pardonable asperity styles the Confession a most voluminous and verbose document, and on this ground among others passes it by as of small significance. The Larger Catechism, for reasons growing out of its intended use, is more expanded,—probably to a point which is undesirable at this date, especially so far as such expansion may lead to the neglect of that careful study which the formulary, in some respects preferable to the Confession itself, really deserves.

There should be added to this statement of the order and proportion of the Symbols a proper recognition of the clearness of their definitions and their propositions, the logical exactness of the reasoning, and the dignity and commanding force of the language employed. Marsden (History of the Later Puritans) after speaking of the Confession as in many respects an admirable summary of Christian doctrine, adds that the style is pure and good, the truths are selected with admirable skill, the arguments are always clear, the subjects well distributed, and sufficiently comprehensive to form at least the outlines of a perfect system of divinity. If we bear these features well in mind, we shall attain some adequate estimate of the strength and worth of these formularies as exponents of that general scheme of doctrine, which proved to be such a support and bulwark to the Reformed churches throughout Europe amid the turbulence developing during the later stages of the Reformation. Documents constructed as these were, and so well adapted to educate the young, to enlighten the ignorant, to direct and control the teachings of the pulpit, to supply solid foundations of belief to the church, and to meet and overcome the multitudinous notions and heresies of the age, were simply invaluable.

A third characteristic is the Christian moderation, which in a high degree marks the Symbols. It is to be admitted that the Assembly were strongly prone to that strictness and rigidity in thinking, and that positiveness in conviction and speech, which were marked characteristics of their age. They were stern men because the times were stern: they had also inherited some measure of the intolerance that had prevailed in Britain in antecedent generations. Yet, tried by just standards they were truly, genuinely moderate men. Some of the historical reasons for such moderation have already been named. It was absolutely vital to the success of the scheme for the establishment of one national church in Britain, that in the exposition of doctrine as well as polity, the Assembly should so far as possible conciliate both Episcopacy and Independency. One index of the earnest desire of all parties to secure uniformity or at least tacit concurrence in these matters, appears in the communication addressed at an early day by Parliament to the Assembly, counseling it to take into consideration all differences of opinion respecting church government, and to endeavor an union if it be possible, and in case that cannot be done, to endeavor the finding out some way how tender consciences, who cannot in all things submit to the common rule which shall be established, may be borne with according to the Word and as may stand with the public peace.

This was as indispensable in doctrine as in government. If the Assembly had emphasized the five points of Calvinism as sharply as the Synod of Dort had done a quarter of a century earlier, it is certain that they could have carried with them neither the Parliament nor the English people. They also indulged, as we have seen, the hope that the formularies they were preparing would find acceptance on the continent, and possibly become a doctrinal basis so temperate and catholic that on it all varieties of Calvinism could stand together. Nor is it too much to say that, positive and stringent Calvinists as most of them were, the Assembly were in the main moderate and considerate in their feeling toward representatives of other types of belief,—as we know them to have been remarkably conciliatory toward one another. Of the latter fact the Minutes, brief as they are, furnish interesting evidence. What Gillespie described as mutual endeavors for accommodation, and Reynolds as the mutual condescensions of brethren, habitually characterized alike the debates and the fellowship. Tenacious as Baillie was of high Augustinianism, he declares in one of his letters, that it shall be his endeavor that the Assembly meddle not with subtle questions,

out leave them to the schools. Gillespie himself in one of his discourses before Parliament said with great earnestness: Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it, in which it shall be said that the children of God in Britain are enemies and persecutors of each other.

One illustration of the prevalent temper appears in the significant fact, that there is not a single reference in the Confession or Catechisms from first to last to any antagonistic opinions found in Protestant creeds. The true doctrine of the sacraments and especially of the holy Supper, for example, is clearly and fully stated, and what is styled the popish sacrifice of the mass, with its correlated theory of transubstantiation and of grace corporeally received, is positively condemned; but no distinct allusion to the Lutheran view appears anywhere, except it be in the statement that Christ is not corporeally or carnally but spiritually present in that sacred observance. In like manner the doctrines of the deadness of the will in the sinner, and of the absolute necessity for the initial or prevenient grace of the Spirit in order to his restoration to spiritual life, are forcibly stated, but with no visible allusion to the great Arminian controversy in Holland whose tumultuous noises were still breaking like mad waves on the English shores. So the theologic conception of the Covenants is unfolded in simple phrase, and in the form chiefly of practical application as explanatory of the doctrine of salvation, yet wholly without reference to those disputations respecting the legitimacy and scope of that conception, which were still raging on the continent. It is also noticeable that while the continental formularies not infrequently name the errorists whom their doctrines condemned, (as in the Second Helvetic Conf. where, in addition to much general condemnation of heretical opinion, no less than thirty heretical persons or classes are held up specifically for execration,) no such instance appears in the Symbols, except in the references to the church and polity of Rome. The statement that the opinion that men can be saved by following the light of nature, as distinguished from the light of the Gospel, is *very pernicious and to be detested*, is hardly an exception; and the same may be said of the statement respecting the works done by unregenerate men, which was designed to be condemnatory of the erroneous teachings of the nascent English deism.

The Assembly followed the wise rule of presenting the true doctrines, as they conceived them, as clearly and fully as the limitations of a confessional declaration permitted, and then leaving

these doctrines to make their way for themselves in silent majesty against all erroneous or pernicious opinion. They had seen and known enough respecting the issues of the opposite course, as exhibited not only in the creeds but in the bitter controversies of Protestants on the continent, to make them in general both moderate and irenic in their doctrinal affirmations. It is also to be noticed that they repeatedly waived expressions of opinion on secondary points or issues such as had excited exasperating and alienating debates in other quarters, and contented themselves with the presentation of what they agreed in regarding as fundamental, or at least as of special importance. Reynolds in his discourse delivered on a day devoted to fasting and prayer, exhorted the Assembly in all matters merely problematical and of private persuasion wherein godly men may be differently minded without breach of love or hazard of salvation, to set aside their personal judgmeut and opinions rather than by them to hinder the peace of the church. This was evidently the general desire and purpose. Golden silence was often more precious in their estimation than a hundred silvern expositions.

A fourth characteristic of the Symbols to which occasional reference has already been made, but which deserves to be mentioned again in this concluding survey, is their spiritual and practical quality. Mitchell justly says that the Assembly aimed, not only to set forth the whole scheme of Reformed doctrine comprehensively in harmonious development, in a form of which their country should have no reason to be ashamed in the presence of any of the sister churches on the continent, but also and above all to present it in a form which would conduce greatly to the fostering of Christian knowledge and Christian life. One illustration, already suggested, must suffice. No such description of genuine Christian experience in its various stages, can be found elsewhere in Protestant symbolism as appears in the group of nine chapters, beginning with Effectual Calling and ending with the Assurance of Grace and Salvation. These chapters present the great theme in most tender and impressive style, with a measure of fullness which leaves no important element untouched, with a remarkable profoundness of insight into the nature of man and the operations of the Spirit upon and within man, yet with a crystalline plainness that renders them intelligible even to a child,—illustrating strikingly the aphorism of Milton, that in matters of religion he is learnedest who is plainest. These chapters might be read together as a discourse in any Christian pulpit, with the expectation not only that they would

be understood, but that they would instruct and convince, convict and save. They constitute in fact what is the substance of the best evangelical preaching of this age as of preceding ages, not merely in Presbyterian circles, but within all kindred Protestant communions. There may be differences here or there in minor interpretation, but in the main, evangelical Christendom today holds the substance of these nine chapters as expressing the essence, if not the form, of its belief respecting the great realities therein set forth—the true doctrine of the Christian Life.

Fifthly: the practical ethics of the Symbols,—their clear enunciation of the broad principles on which all acceptable morality is based, and their enforcement of these principles, as seen in the exposition of the Ten Commandments, may fitly be placed by the side of the description of Christian experience just named. It is a fact not sufficiently noted, that it was their elevated ethical teaching almost as much as their doctrine or polity, which gave the Reformed churches throughout Europe their marked influence and their great success. And it may fairly be questioned whether it was not the system of ethics enunciated by the Assembly as much as its theology, which gave the Presbyterianism of the age such commanding power over the English mind and conscience. What has been said already respecting the Westminster doctrine of law in its nature, scope and supremacy, and respecting the place of law in the divine economy of grace, in both the Old Testament and the New, need not be repeated here. There is no swerving in the Symbols from the fundamental truth which natural theology as well as Scripture enforces, that God is a moral governor over mankind; that he is administering that government in infinite equity and infinite grace; that his holy law is a reality covering the entire life and being of every man, and that all who live, are and must forever be accountable to him for their obedience or their disobedience thereto. As has already been said, there is certainly in all Christian symbolism no such unfolding of the particular claims of this law as is found in the two Catechisms, nor is there any chapter or article in any antecedent creed which equals that on the law itself in the Confession. While these remain in the Symbols, it can never be said with justice that they are the dried and dead expressions of a dead and dried theology—expressions in which the Christianity of our time need feel no special interest. There may be for the hour a swinging away in apparent indifference from the cardinal proposition of the Confession, that God is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things;

and that as such he hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, and upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth. But this proposition is as eternal as Deity ; and the pendulum of theological thought and interest will again swing toward it with full and reverent recognition. And in that day, if not in this, the Westminster doctrine of the divine government and sway as absolutely supreme in human life, will be seen to be among the most glorious and potential truths taught in these venerable formularies.

4. Defects in the Symbols: Rules of interpretation: special points of objection.

In enumerating these characteristic excellences of the Symbols, it is neither necessary nor legitimate to hesitate in noting their correspondent defects. No wise exponent or defender may close his eyes to the fact that, as according to the Confession itself all councils may err and many have erred, so the Assembly made mistakes at various points in its exposition of the Christian faith. No doctrinal temple, constructed by the hand of man, is to be pronounced complete or perfect, however substantial its material or beautiful its proportions. But in examining such defects in the Symbols, care must be taken to deal justly with them, and to test them by none but fair and wise considerations. First of all, it is an obvious rule of interpretation that the terms and phrases employed in them should be apprehended, not according to the current usage of this age, but in the exact sense in which they were understood by the authors, when used in their definitions of doctrine. Such expressions as *mere* love, *mere* grace, *mere* good pleasure, for example, are not in any degree depreciative, but imply simply that the divine love or grace or pleasure referred to are pure, unmixed with other elements,—crystalline and perfect. Such words as *utterly* and *wholly*, when used to describe the entirety of sin in the nature, should in like manner be interpreted, not as expressing what is often signified by the unconfessional though theological phrase, total depravity—a natural deadness of the sinful soul, often with an implication that such deadness renders the sinner as bad as he could possibly be,—but simply as affirming that sin has taken supreme possession not of the will only, or the affections only, but of the whole or total man. The word, *pleasure*, so often understood as indicating an arbitrary or inexplicable delight or some willful caprice on the part of God, is in fact a term borrowed from royal courts to indicate the behest or decision of an absolute sovereign. As applied to the disposi-

tion or action of God, it designates a moral quality—not happiness merely, but happiness regulated by infinite holiness.

In like manner the terms, *power* and *sovereignty*, imply not only inherent ability to produce or to control results, but such ability coupled with infinite righteousness and goodness,—the sovereign power which belongs to God as the supreme Being, and is wielded by him in all spheres with absolute equity and love. In a similar way such representative terms as *will*, *counsel*, *decree*, *covenant*, have unquestionably become largely specialized, in some cases broadened and in others much narrowed, and in various ways diverted in significance, since they were employed by the divines of Westminster to describe their philosophical and theological beliefs. The various divisions and subdivisions of the word, *justice*, introduced by later theologians, and especially as used in their recondite relations to the atoning sacrifice of Christ, furnish a very practical illustration of the same fact. We may note also such terms as *estate*, as signifying a general condition rather than a legal status; *guilt*, not as in all cases indicating penal culpability, but rather some exposure to retributive consequences flowing from the acts of others; and *good works*, as pointing not to deeds induced by natural morality, but to such deeds as the Holy Spirit leads the soul to perform—works that accompany salvation. All of these terms have occasionally been employed by dogmatizing expositors in senses which the Assembly would have hesitated to accept, or possibly would have openly rejected.

A similar rule of interpretation ought in fairness to be recognized in the consideration of many minor statements and declarations in the Symbols. Obviously, these should always be interpreted, not by the standards of theological opinion or of doctrinal development in some subsequent era like our own, but in full view of the times when and the circumstances amid which these formularies were written, and also of all that had preceded them along either confessional or theological lines during the stirring era of the Reformation. When, for illustration, we read their statements respecting the civil magistracy, the authority of the civil power within the church, the obligation of magistrates to enforce church discipline by civil pains and penalties, we are bound to interpret these declarations in full view, not of our own times or country, but of Britain in the seventeenth century, and of the special conditions which led to and in a degree justified such teachings. Again, when the pope of Rome is said in the Confession to be the man of sin and son of perdition, or the church of Rome is contemned as a synagogue of Satan, or its adherents

are classed with infidels and idolaters, it is but just to bear in mind the strongly hostile relations of Protestantism and Romanism throughout Europe in the age when these declarations were written, and also the equally condemnatory teachings of nearly all the antecedent Protestant creeds. These are but two out of many illustrations that might be named. The justice of the general rule suggested—the injustice of any other mode of treatment, will be readily acknowledged. To estimate such incidental teachings by the light which the succeeding centuries have shed on the subjects discussed, would be equivalent to demanding that the Assembly should have known in advance all that has been revealed by Providence or by the Holy Spirit to subsequent ages.

It is an obvious fact that no small proportion of the criticism made upon the Symbols relates to such matters of language, modes of expression, minor statements and declarations,—criticism which careful and candid consideration will do very much to correct. Defects in essential doctrine, wherever they become manifest, are of course much more serious. So far as any such defects are attributable to the Calvinistic system in general, little need be said respecting them at this point; they have already come sufficiently under our review. From the days of John Calvin until now, that system has been sorely assailed on many sides: to detail such assaults even in mere outline would require volumes. Its five points have each and all been resisted by argument, beclouded through misrepresentation, held up to aspersion and ridicule. Its central truth, the divine sovereignty dominant in grace as in nature, has been condemned as radically inconsistent with the correlated truth of human freedom, and as substantially resolving all human experience within the religious sphere into fatalism. Its interpretation of the Gospel as a scheme of elective grace, and its affirmation of the sovereignty of the Spirit in the exercise of his regenerating and sanctifying power, are said to obliterate all responsibility on the part of man, and to make salvation a matter of destiny merely. Its attempts to harmonize divergent elements in doctrine, and to bring antithetic truths into coherence and unity around its central principle, have been declared to be failures. The effort to sustain such a doctrinal system has been pronounced hopeless, and the prophecy has been made that in some future era not very far distant Calvinism will cease to exist except as an offensive memory. Such adverse criticism has also been much excited and stimulated, if not in some degree justified, by the course of those advocates of the

system who have ignored its many vital relations to other types of evangelical doctrine, and have found their chief occupation in emphasizing differences, and pressing into the foreground its extremer elements, in violent antagonism with all other Christian systems. Indeed it has been questioned whether such advocates, in their excess of zeal and their sweeping and exclusive claims in its favor, have not been at times almost as injurious to it as its avowed opponents. Yet, notwithstanding all observable defects in generic Calvinism, and all exterior antagonisms and unfortunate or misguided advocacy, such has been the inherent vitality of the system, and such its impregnable foundation and warrant in Holy Writ, that it has been able for nearly three centuries to sustain itself successfully against opposition and hindrance of whatever variety. And the supreme fact of present moment is, that it still lives as an acceptable form of evangelical doctrine, notwithstanding all real or supposed blemishes attaching to it,—that it was never stronger or more commanding than it is now,—and that it bids fair to abide in vigor and influence, though doubtless with further development and improvement, through the coming centuries.

It must be confessed, however, that the Symbols have excited special objections above most other Calvinistic creeds, by the peculiarly strong and tenacious mode in which they set forth the generic doctrine concerning man, concerning the divine decree or decrees, and concerning the plan and process of grace, including both election and reprobation. It has already been admitted that their delineation of man as a sinner, and of his moral helplessness apart from divine grace, is too sweeping and forbidding, not only in phraseology but also in substance. They do not recognize with sufficient fullness those better elements in fallen human nature, those rational and ethical capabilities surviving in the soul, which may and do coexist with a spiritual pravitas such as no power less than divine can remedy. And it is unquestionably one of the delicate but indispensable offices of living Calvinism to adjust these antithetic conceptions more exactly and more in harmony with the underlying verities in the case. But even here it is hard for a really considerate, honest, conscientious mind, after careful scrutiny of human nature just as it reveals itself in the life of humanity, to say how much subtraction should be made from the confessional statements, or just what addition is requisite to secure exact, absolute correspondence between these affirmations and the profound and sad reality. The more deeply one reflects in all soberness on things as they are, the more will he probably

be inclined to conclude that, however open to criticism the language employed may be, the substantial doctrine affirmed is not so very far astray either from the solemn teachings of Scripture or from the equally solemn revelations of actual life.

What has been said already respecting the eternal decree, in its nature and scope and historic evolution, renders needless in this final review more than a brief word of explanation. We are familiar with the long and earnest debates on this subject in the Assembly,—ending in the use, by obvious compromise, of the singular term, decree, or the one eternal and comprehending counsel and purpose, free and omniscient and immutable, as defined in the Confession; and of the plural term, decrees, or the wise, free and holy acts emanating from that eternal purpose, but executed successively in time, as set forth in the Larger Catechism. The speculative conception of one such comprehensive decree or determination, formed before the existence of any creature or object, and slowly unfolding itself through the ages, with infinite wisdom and infinite power, must always retain a place in Christian theology,—partly because it furnishes the necessary basis for philosophic thought respecting God and his acts, but chiefly because it is so frequently suggested by the phraseology of Scripture. Yet this conception, broadly stated, does seem to include both the natural or physical universe and the psychical or moral universe in one and the same process of evolution in time, and thus to subject the movements of winds or planets, and the spiritual experiences of men and angels alike, to the same fixed and immutable method, determined fundamentally by the eternal will. And in the presence of such a tremendous verity, it seems hard to find proper room for the antithetic truth that, living and acting in the very center of such an evolution, man is really free, and is consequently responsible for the part he takes in the vast and complex process. Nor is it strange that the doctrine of the one eternal decree is simply cast aside by some on the ground of its supposed antagonism with the doctrine of freedom, or that other thoughtful minds, entangled in the perplexities of such a conception, should doubt whether man is truly free, and should even lapse into what has been described as a Christian fatalism, more depressing even than Islam.

Later Calvinism has found relief in large degree from both liabilities by describing the eternal counsel and purpose of God as executing itself according to Scripture in an historic series of decrees, or of wise and free and holy acts, occurring in chronologic succession, always in vital relation to each other as ante-

cedent and consequent, but always executed in harmony with human freedom as well as with the divine purpose. The creation of man, the covenant of works, the fall, the plan of salvation, the giving of the law, the incarnation of the Son of God as the Messiah, the redemptive mission of Christ, are all events or acts, taking their eternally predestinated place in time, yet in their historic occurrence involving always the activity of the free will in man as truly as the comprehending and dominating will of God. And it is pleasant to note that this associated fact is distinctly set before us, even more fully than in any other Protestant creed, in the strong statement of the Confession that God has so endowed the human will with natural liberty—has so far created man in his own image, that he is not forced or by any absolute or controlling energy of nature determined toward good or toward evil.

Moral liberty is thus recognized as being as truly a fundamental principle in the world of humanity, as necessity is the fundamental principle in the world of nature. While God executes his great purposes in the physical universe by one series of laws, adjusted to the constitution and design of that material organism, he executes his greater purposes in the moral universe wherein man lives and acts, by quite another series of laws,—laws no less wisely adjusted to the spiritual constitution of man, yet no less fixed and definite in their working, even amid all the perplexities induced by the fact of human liberty and of human sin. This is a truth clearly emphasized in the Symbols, and one which must be admitted by every thoughtful student either of Scripture or of the acts and experiences of our humanity. The one decree thus inevitably divides itself to our apprehension into two decrees, inasmuch as there are two such universes, radically different in their constitution, and as much unlike in experiment as the unfolding of a lily or rose is unlike the process of regeneration, or the unfolding of character, blessedness, aspiration, worship in the Christianized soul. That the Symbols, while they recognize both of those modes of divine activity, lay the chief stress on the agency of God in the moral sphere, and that within this sphere they always count the divine efficiency first and supreme, and regard the human activity involved as secondary and subordinate, is very obvious. And possibly it is true that too much stress is laid relatively on what God does, and too little stress relatively on what man does or ought to do, in the matter of his own salvation. Yet such a defect is after all less perilous to religion and to the interests of the soul, than that which regards man as equally with God the arbiter of his own spiritual destinies.

Further objections under this head relate to the confessional teachings respecting the plan of salvation in its design and scope, the sufficiency and efficacy of the atonement and mediation of Christ, the particular and unconditional election and salvation of those who are embraced in that plan, and the reprobation and condemnation of the rest of mankind. These objections have already come repeatedly into view in the progress of these studies, and may now be passed with the single suggestion that they very largely lose their force, when contemplated in the light of the important modifications and meliorations of the earlier Calvinistic teaching which have been extensively accepted in more recent times. The design and scope of the plan of salvation, for example, have come to be appreciated by living Calvinism as they could not have been by the divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The current view of the range and possible efficiency of the atonement and mediation of Christ, has certainly been greatly broadened, though without any sacrifice of the essential doctrine as held by the primitive Calvinism. The scope of election also has been vastly widened, with respect at least to infants and imbeciles and to the heathen races. The divine sovereignty in grace has come to be held at various points in closer conjunction with the antithetic truth that God so loved the world as to give his Son for its redemption. Such broad views were not unknown even in the Assembly. Arrowsmith in his noted discourse on Christ as the Sun of Righteousness, declared that there is no man but partakes of his light, his goodness, in one kind or other, though with much variety in the success. Ever since his day there have been Calvinists who have held similar convictions as to the extensive scope of divine grace and the cosmic possibilities inherent in the plan of salvation. Such meliorations of the earlier doctrine were never so widely affirmed or so freely admitted as now; nor was Calvinism ever so conscious as now of its spiritual affinities with other types of evangelical theology on these points—points where once the fiercest antagonism prevailed. Neither does such affiliation involve any abandonment of what is really fundamental in the Calvinistic as distinct from other theological systems: essential Calvinism is in fact becoming all the stronger, loftier and more comprehensive and influential through this meliorating and irenic process.

In their severe statements respecting reprobation, or the final condemnation of the wicked as determined in the eternal decree or purpose of God, the Symbols are indeed peculiar. No other Reformed creed, unless it be the Synod of Dort or the Lambeth

Articles, (which have rather an historical than a confessional value,) contains any declaration so positive. The Synod defined what was called the decree of reprobation, (Head I: Art. 15) as the sovereign determination of God to leave some men in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, withholding from them the grace of conversion, and in his just judgment permitting them to follow their own way, even down to condemnation and punishment. But this final result was represented as turning, not on an eternal purpose to create men in order that God might exhibit his justice in their ultimate condemnation—as Calvin had held—but on their free choice of sin and evil, with its consequence in misery, temporal and eternal. It is noticeable that the Remonstrant or Arminian party against whom this Canon was framed, while affirming that Christ died for all men, and that by his cross he has actually obtained redemption and the forgiveness of sins for all who will believe on him, still admitted that the incorrigible and unbelieving are left in their sin, and are under divine wrath as alienate from Christ. And the Westminster Symbols go no further than the Synod of Dort in their statement respecting the cause and the ground of the condemnation of men: they nowhere proceed to the extreme position of Calvin, that in the eternal purpose wicked men were made in order to be damned, in illustration of the divine justice.

The Assembly evidently shrank from the severities of such an affirmation, and fell back upon the more negative conception of preterition, as a substitute for the positive dogma of reprobation. Some of the members held with Calamy (Minutes, 153) that by virtue of the death of Christ there is an administration of grace even to the reprobate, so that they in rejecting such grace do willfully damn themselves as a massa corrupta. It is a fact of considerable significance that, in deference to this opinion, it was proposed and somewhat debated in the Assembly to omit any statement respecting reprobation. This would have been in harmony with the course pursued in the framing of most of the continental symbols, which are quite silent respecting the relation of the divine decree to those who reject the divine grace. The statement in the Confession finally agreed upon, (Ch. III: vii) simply declares that God, in the exercise of his sovereign power or dominion over his creatures passes by the wicked and unbelieving, and ordains them to dishonor and wrath *for their sins*, to the praise of his glorious justice. Wherever reference is made elsewhere to such final condemnation, the divine decree is represented as, not absolute like the decree of creation, but relative

and conditioned on the antecedent fact of sin. It may be added that the modification proposed in the recent Revision, though not wholly satisfactory, is a manifest improvement on the original section, since it affirms that God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, nor is it his decree, but the wickedness of their own hearts, which restraineth and hindereth them from accepting the free offer of his grace made in the Gospel.

It surely involves no disparagement of generic Calvinism if we admit the existence of such deficiencies as have now been named: we may rather glory in the fact that in its historic evolution it has shown such capacity to correct its earlier defects, and to grow with the ages into larger and finer proportions. A striking illustration of this healthful capability may be seen in the Essay of the younger Edwards on the Improvements in Theology made, as he claims, by his illustrious father. It may fairly be questioned whether his filial interpretation is in every instance accurate, yet his claim is in substance just and valid. These Improvements include many of the most central and vital topics in Christian theology, such as the end of God in creation, the origin of moral evil, the nature of virtue, liberty and necessity, the basis of atonement, imputation, regeneration and conversion, and experimental religion. It cannot be questioned that ever since the day of Edwards the term, Calvinism, has had a broader, loftier, more spiritual meaning than it had possessed in any previous age. That further improvements have been made since that day is manifest to every careful student of Calvinistic literature: that still other improvements are possible, and will in due time be gained, is not less manifest to one who studies well the current trends and tendencies in theologic thought. It lies in the very nature of Calvinism, perhaps above any other system of doctrine, to be thus unfolding itself continuously—developing and maturing through the centuries from its Pauline stock: were it to pause in such evolution, it would soon become as dry and dead a thing as the metaphysical dogmatism of the Scholastic ages. And surely Calvin himself would have been the first to repudiate the notion that his system was finished and complete as it came from his master hand.

Passing from this final survey of the excellences and the deficiences discernible in the Symbols, we naturally turn to consider the closely related question involved in the effort to impose them as authoritative formularies, as the only legitimate expositions of religious doctrine and duty, throughout the British Isles.

5. Authority of the Symbols: Question of toleration.

We are not concerned here with the inherent right of such systematic and condensed statements of Christian truth to be received in virtue of what they are in themselves—an authoritative claim that is of course primal and fundamental. We contemplate rather the type of authoritativeness resident in the church as the organized exponent and representative of such truth, and the right of the church to require acceptance of its confessional teaching—the matter, in other words, of ecclesiastical jurisdiction and ecclesiastical toleration in matters of faith. Attention has already been directed to this practical problem in the discussion of the doctrine of the Civil Magistracy, and the supposed obligation of the magistrate to sustain the church in the enforcement of faith and duty by the hand and authority of the state. But in the instance now in question there are some other aspects of the problem which call for further consideration at this point.

It may be legitimately claimed at the outset, though it is often denied, that the doctrine and polity and worship prescribed by the Assembly were in reality framed in the interest of religious liberty. The members of that body knew well the dark story of those days when Romanism, under the patronage of Mary, enforced its sovereignty in England through persecutions and even by martyrdoms. They remembered the days, nearer at hand, when Episcopacy under Laud had asserted its supremacy, not indeed in aspects so dreadful yet with marked severities. Some of them had suffered in standing, in property and in person, at the hands of prelatist rulers. While they were not seriously burdened by the imposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles regarded as a scheme of doctrine, they had been sorely oppressed by the demand for uniformity in order and worship, enforced by both the ecclesiastical and the civil power. And since the opportunity long desired had now come, to frame a polity which should conform to their deep convictions of human rights in the sphere of religion, and to devise a mode of worship which would give them freedom from galling liturgical bondage, they gladly welcomed that opportunity. That they were wholly free from the influence of other and less exalted considerations, cannot be claimed. They were men of like passions with others, and some measure of personal pride and desire to rule, of partisan narrowness and severity also, and of a sentiment of hostility if not of vengeance toward those who had dominated so haughtily over them, doubtless mingled more or less with their better purposes. Yet they

consciously wrought in the interest of liberty, civil as well as religious. Their enunciation of the sublime truth that God alone is Lord of the conscience, and that the conscience is therefore free from the obligation to submit to any doctrines or commandments of men that are contrary to his Word or beside it, was a sublime step in advance of anything that England or Europe had ever known. It was a declaration which applied to the State as well as the Church, and which if faithfully put into practice, would secure to every man in the civil as well as in the ecclesiastical sphere, all those rights and prerogatives in belief and in act which belong to man as man. That declaration carries with it by inevitable inference, not only a mutual recognition of liberty on the part of all believers, but also the living sentiment of brotherhood, binding and uniting all men by the closest spiritual ties. Toleration, forbearance, confidence, the sense of unity amid diversities not fundamental, all flow spontaneously from this fountain. To have proclaimed such a declaration, and to have framed their doctrine and polity and worship so largely in harmony with it, is an honor of which the divines of Westminster can never be justly deprived.

It may also be fairly affirmed that, when they had accomplished their task so far as practicable, and when through their agency Presbyterianism had been in a sense established in Britain as the lawful religion of the realm, they were not extreme in the spirit and method with which they pressed the claim of uniformity. Toward Romanism they were indeed unflinchingly severe: toward those whom they regarded as in a positive sense errorists, such as Socinians or Quakers or Antinomians, they were disposed to enforce that claim with much persistence, and even by the arm of civil power. We have seen how strenuous they became—more and more strenuous as such errorists of various kinds sprang up around them in increasing swarms—in endeavoring to suppress open heresy even by the imprisonment of heretics, and the burning of heretical books and other kindred proceedings. But toward Episcopalians on one side and the rising Independents on the other side, they were habitually considerate, at least according to the standard and habit of their times. The debates in the Assembly repeatedly show how conciliatory and how patient and generous they were toward the latter party, which was so soon to be put in the same civil position, and be subjected to the same moral tests,—quite as conciliatory and as patient and generous as Cromwell and his allies proved to be in the brief day of their power. For it is an unquestionable fact that the Independents

drew the same lines of distinction against errorists which the Assembly had drawn, and enforced them just as rigorously. The sixteen doctrines named as fundamental by John Owen, their most celebrated divine, present a standard of orthodoxy hardly less rigid, if any, than that of Westminster; and the record of their brief supremacy in England shows how earnest they were in the maintenance of these doctrines, even by severe civil processes. Cromwell himself at an early stage in his career declared that Presbyterians, Independents, all have the same spirit of faith and prayer, . . . all have the real unity, the most glorious, being the inward and spiritual, in the body and in the Head. In things of the mind, he once added, we look for no compulsion but that of light and reason. Yet as the conflict of opinion and purpose and of political interest went on, Cromwell became as dogmatic and bitter against opposition as any, and the Presbyterians became at last his special aversion.

Prof. Mitchell has justly claimed for the Assembly, that they reclaimed for liberty much which had before them been kept under subjection to authority, both ecclesiastical and civil; and that in various ways, as by limiting lawful commands in matters of faith and worship to things enjoined in the Word of God, they helped forward the cause of freedom in both church and state, and planted the seed from which, as the divine Word was better studied and understood, a fully developed system of toleration could not fail to grow. He also claims that, besides the liberty thus secured within the church, the Assembly granted or at least acquiesced in a larger amount of freedom and of toleration outside of the church, than had ever been enjoyed in Britain before. Masson says that there were three types or grades of toleration in England at this period; absolute liberty of conscience, with no national church or interference with religion by the state; unlimited toleration in and around an established national church; and limited toleration within such a church;—all alike opposed by the dogma of no toleration, and of absolute and coerced conformity within the one religious establishment. It is quite apparent, though each of these four views had representatives in the Assembly, that the majority, although Masson thinks otherwise, after long discussion accepted the mediate doctrine of an established church, with limited toleration of conflicting beliefs and policies. It may be that, had the doctrinal system of the Assembly been less extended and elaborate, and had the polity been less rigidly wrought out, the area of true liberty for themselves and for others would have been considerably

broader, and practical toleration would have been more fully realized. But on the other hand it should be remembered that a great multitude of sects and parties had sprung up on English soil during that eventful period, and that among them there were some who had wholly lost sight of the broad distinction between liberty and license, and who if they had been suffered to have their own way, would have plunged both church and state, and the Christian faith with them, into remediless confusion. It was as necessary therefore, to guard against destructive license—against loose doctrines and loose theories, clamoring on every side for recognition, as against the tyranny, civil and ecclesiastical, which in the name of religion had in fact been driving religion from the land. This is the historic explanation of the emphatic clauses in chapter XX, declaring that those who upon pretense of Christian liberty do practice any sin or cherish any lust, and those who upon the same pretense publish opinions that are contrary to the light of nature or to the known principles of Christianity, or destructive to the peace and order of the church, shall be called to account and proceeded against through ecclesiastical and also civil censures. The position of Luther between the priesthood of Rome on one hand and the Anabaptist insurrectionists on the other, was substantially like that of the Assembly, and their policy like his was one of mediate wisdom, cautiously steering clear of two equally destructive extremes.

It would certainly be requiring too much to demand in their case a temper and habit of toleration such as our own age can hardly be said to have attained. It was necessary that there should be some long and sharp experiences, some severe testing of the broad principle that God alone is Lord of the conscience, before its real nature and its proper scope and authoritativeness could be seen. That principle had been in some degree affirmed even from the age of Luther, in the specific form of the right of private judgment; and in that form had been recognized as an essential basis both of Protestant doctrine and of Protestant life. Yet that just rule had been perverted by the Socinians and others on the continent as a justification of destructive license in thought and belief, especially in the interpretation of the divine Word. Similar peril accompanied the principle as enunciated by the Assembly in their noble chapter on Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience. They presented it in positive and mandatory form, and faithfully warned all men against betraying such liberty of conscience, and betraying reason also, by believing any dogma or yielding to any practice upon human authority only. Yet, as

we have already had occasion to note, they knew not how to apply their own rule in all cases, and especially in the very trying circumstances that environed them, and in various ways fell short of their own noble declaration. But surely we who, with larger light and the benefits of much recorded experience, sometimes fail in such application, are hardly at liberty to regard them and their mistakes with severity. Toleration is a plant of slow and difficult growth in the human soul; as an experience it requires time and patience for its evolution. The idea of toleration, says Masson, was born out of pain, out of suffering, out of persecution; not pain inflicted constantly on one and the same section of men, but pain revolving, pain circulated, pain distributed, till the whole round of the concourse of sects had felt it in turn; and it was not till then that the only principle of its prevention gradually dawned on the common consciousness. Forty additional years of such experience were requisite in Britain before the Toleration Act of 1688 could be passed; and the passage of that celebrated Act was only one of the early steps in a process which it has required generations, even centuries, to bring to its present stage of development.

One marked illustration of the truly Christian moderation and catholicity prevalent at least in some Presbyterian circles, may be seen in the Vindication of The Presbyterial Government and Ministry, a pamphlet issued by the Provincial Assembly of London, shortly after the Westminster Assembly had completed its doctrinal work, but before its final adjournment.* This little treatise argues against the urging of uniformity in circumstantial things, on the ground that the parts, gifts, and graces of men differ, and that if there be no forbearance in inferior matters, there must be perpetual conflict within the church. It enjoins upon all Christians the duty of studying whatever may tend to unity, on the ground that unity is as essential in religion as purity; and the further duty of abiding in communion within

*The Provincial Assembly was an ecclesiastical body created by ordinance of Parliament to supervise for the province of London the interests of the Presbyterian church within that province. It was composed of representatives from the twelve minor assemblies (presbyterial bodies) organized within the same territory. Its first meeting was held in May 1647, and it continued to hold regular sessions twice annually until the death of Cromwell, and the accession of Charles II to the throne; after which event English Presbyterianism became a vanishing shadow. One of its most significant acts was its strenuous Testimony, in 1647, against the Errours, Heresies and Blasphemies of these Times, and the Toleration of them: Pres. Review, Jan. 1881.

the one church organization, in the temper of tolerance with antithetic beliefs. It forbids all needless ruptures within the church, protests against divisions among churches, or setting up one church against another, and all schismatic gathering of churches out of true churches because of difference in small matters. It declares that such divisive processes will not only disturb, but in time will destroy the purity and power of religion, ruin the peace of Christians and Christendom, and open a wide gap for the entrance of atheism and heresy and all manner of wickedness. And finally the members of the body, some of whom were members of the Assembly also, solemnly pledged themselves to preach up and to practice mutual forbearance and toleration in all things that may consist with the fundamentals of religion, with the power of godliness, and with that peace which Christ hath established in his church. Certainly the men who could enunciate such a statement as this were not the narrow, bigoted, intolerant men whom Hallam and others decry them as being; and so far as they represented the sentiment of current Presbyterianism at that painful juncture in English history, those who ecclesiastically are their descendants have no occasion to blush on their behalf. The boastful catholicity of this age has said or done nothing that is worthier of commendation.

6. Relation of the Symbols to other Protestant creeds: to continental Protestantism.

In conjunction with this brief survey of the position and authority of the Symbols on British soil, it will be well to glance once more at their relations to Protestant symbolism on the continent, and their marked influence upon continental thought and life. These relations have already been suggested at various points in this series of studies, but deserve some further notice in this final Lecture. It has been again and again apparent, not merely that the differences between the Symbols and preceding Protestant creeds of continental origin are far less extensive or important than the resemblances, but further, that as to all the essential elements of Christian doctrine, we may discern in them, not merely similarities, but a broad and grand unity. Respecting the cardinal truths of revelation, of God in his being and activities, of man in his moral constitution and his lost condition through sin, of Christ in his person and his offices as the Savior of the world, of the nature of salvation and its conditions and manifestations, and of the church with its holy ordinances and worship and mission, these creeds are essentially one—one and indivisible in the substance if not in the form of their

teaching. We indeed discover in them varieties in phraseology and statement, and in order and grouping and fullness, and these varieties are sometimes so marked as to distinguish them sharply one from another. We also discover actual differences here and there in the proportion or the emphasis with which certain doctrines are held, or occasionally in the very matter of these doctrines. One of the most obvious illustrations appears in the antithetic and to some extent mutually exclusive teachings of the Lutheran and the Reformed creeds respectively touching the nature of the presence of Christ in the eucharistic feast. Yet the supreme fact, manifest above all such variations, is the fundamental unity which binds all these formularies together in what may in the largest sense be styled a Book of Holy Concord. And it is the peculiar glory of the Symbols of Westminster that, more than any other single creed, they represent and incorporate this doctrinal unity: for it is hardly an exaggeration to say that in them as in a mirror we may almost see the entire doctrinal process of Protestantism making itself confessionally manifest.

It was this fact that led the Assembly, or at least some proportion of its members, to entertain the hope already adverted to, that the Confession they were framing might win its way to general favor and possibly to formal acceptance in the continental churches. There are evidences that this hope was entertained by many in England, outside of the Assembly. In the Act of the House of Lords, approving the first nineteen chapters of the Confession, it was declared (Minutes, 291) that this action is taken in order that the Protestant churches abroad, as well as the people of the kingdom at home, may know that the Parliament did never intend to innovate matters of faith,—doubtless, in other words, did not intend to depart in anything essential, from the general belief of continental Protestantism. Such a hope must indeed have been less strongly indulged with respect to the Lutheran communions. The marked differences in the conception of the sacraments, and especially the eucharist, as set forth in the Lutheran creeds, and also the obvious distinction between the positive and strong Augustinianism maintained by the Assembly, and the mediate Augustinianism with which the influence of Melancthon had infected Germany, stood in the way. The affiliations between Lutheranism and the type of Episcopacy which had prevailed in England for one or two generations, proved a still stronger barrier.* But no such hindrance prevented the free

*An amusing yet painful illustration of the separation which had grown up between the Lutheran and the Reformed parties in general, and especially

outflow of feeling and concord toward the Reformed bodies. One notable manifestation of the degree of intimacy and of mutual confidence existing, appears in the Circular Letter prepared by the Assembly at the suggestion of Parliament in November, 1643, and addressed to the Belgic, French, Helvetian and other Reformed churches—a communication to which some at least of these churches responded with strong assurances of agreement and sympathy.

The primal reason for the hope entertained respecting the possible acceptance and diffusion of the Symbols on the continent appears in the fact just suggested, that there were really no extensive or serious differences between them and the best Reformed formularies. Almost everything of any moment in any of these had been recognized and in some way incorporated, though not always with the same degree of emphasis, in the Symbols. The adherent of each creed could find there, often in brighter coloring, substantially all that had made his own church statement precious to him. Macpherson affirms that the second Helvetic Confession was so far the doctrinal equivalent, not only of the Scotch Confession, but of the Westminster Confession also, that those who honestly accepted the one could not reasonably decline to receive the other. It must also have been obvious that there was much more in them, like the doctrine of the Covenants, which although it had not found expression in any earlier symbol, had been set forth positively in some of the theologies of the period, and was widely accepted as valuable doctrine, quite worthy of such confessional incorporation. As we now view them, the Symbols were not indeed complete as to contents or perfect as to form, but in both respects they excelled all preceding creeds, and must have been so regarded by those continental divines who studied them with care and candor. Their precision of statement, their special exactness in definition, their logical order and movement, and their extensive range and

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between continental Lutheranism and the British Presbyterians, appears in the Minutes of the Assembly. One of the members who had been appointed to examine what are described as the last works of Luther (last words, as suggested by Mitchell, or possibly, latest publications,) reported that there was little good in them, that many things would not advantage the work of reformation, and that they were not fit for publication. Another member found some good things in them, but some of the oddest conceits he had ever met with; and the Prolocutor with several others agreed that there was nothing in them of use to be published. This was in marked contrast with the deference almost universally paid to the writings of Calvin.

comprehension, must have impressed such divines with a special sense of respect. The fine spiritual tone, the deep religious experience manifest in them must have deepened greatly the impression made by the other qualities just named. All in all, it would seem that if any Protestant creed had merit and potency enough to bear transplantation, or could take root healthfully on any other than its native soil, the Westminster Symbols might be expected to attain such distinction.

To the attractive qualities inherent in the Symbols themselves, there were added other inducements to such acceptance, springing from the marked character and position of the Assembly itself. The Synod of Dort bore, as we have seen, more of the aspect of a general or ecumenical council, and as being continental rather than insular, would naturally exert a more potent influence upon the Reformed communions, many of which had been actually represented in its conferences. But in respect to numbers and the prominence of its membership, and especially in respect to the variety and range of the topics considered, that Synod clearly fell behind, even in the estimate of the other Reformed bodies outside of Holland, the venerable council which had sat for five long years in the Jerusalem Chamber, and during that time had considered and acted upon, not merely the five points of Calvinism but almost every other doctrine that stands in any vital connection with the fundamental belief of the Church of Christ on earth. The supremacy of Presbyterianism in Scotland, and its ascendancy for the hour in England, doubtless added much to the significance of the Assembly as a national representative of general Calvinism. In like manner, the desire for unity which had grown up in nearly all circles of evangelical Protestantism, and especially in the Reformed communions, and the increasing consciousness that no successful headway could be made against Rome except through closer confederation and more distinct doctrinal if not ecclesiastical agreement, tended strongly in the same direction. The devoted labors of John Durie, a member of the Assembly who gave a large part of his life to the task of unifying Protestantism throughout Europe, and the kindred labors of other men of like spirit, such as Henderson, also contributed to give the Symbols very high authority as confessional documents wherever Calvinism had been able to root itself. The endeavor of Durie is described in his treatise, published eight years after the adjournment of the Assembly and entitled, Negotiations for the procuring of true Gospel Peace, with Christian Moderation and charitable Unity among the Protestant Churches and Acad-

emies. In that treatise he urges all parties to forbear discussion of trifling differences, and to seek for universal concord, and with respect to the symbolical books to make all practicable concessions in order to secure deeper unity in faith and fellowship: Historical Note, Presbyt. Rev. April, 1887. Had such unity been secured, if not ecclesiastically—which was hardly possible under the existing geographic and political conditions—yet doctrinally and spiritually, around the Westminster formularies as constituting a common creed sufficient for all the Reformed communions, there is little doubt that the history of European Protestantism would have recorded many a brighter page than we are now permitted to read.

But the hindrances in the case were many—too many. The suggestion of Durie and Henderson, like the scheme of the Assembly for the unification of Protestantism in Britain, was far ahead of the age: the times were not ripe for either consummation. These hindrances are easily discerned: some of them may be mentioned here. The very extent and copiousness of the Symbols, required by that effort after completeness which led Dean Stanley to say that the Confession approached more nearly than any other creed to the full proportions of a theological treatise, doubtless stood in the way of its general acceptation. It was too extensive, too elaborate, too closely articulated logically, to be easily apprehensible to or appreciated by the continental mind. It was also distinctively British, distinctively Saxon, in its terminology, and in the form though not the substance of its doctrines; and on this account was the less acceptable outside of Britain. Differences of language and usage, differences in minor elements of church order and in public worship, differences in the modes of handling and presenting sacred truth in the pulpit and elsewhere, also obstructed the path that led toward doctrinal unification. The vast distances between Britain and the Protestant kingdoms such as Switzerland and even Holland,—distances now so easily traversed, also prevented any large measure of fellowship or of general affiliation. But the most serious hindrance of all lay in the sad fact that Presbyterianism could not sustain itself at home, either as a polity or as a representative of Calvinistic doctrine. After the brief triumph and supremacy of English Independency, and especially after the restoration of Episcopacy as the national church in England, the influence of the Symbols on the continent necessarily and rapidly declined, and the possible unification of the Reformed churches on them as a doctrinal standard became a vanishing dream.

One other interesting fact may properly be mentioned in this connection. Hetherington in his History of the Westminster Assembly refers to the idea of an organized Protestant union or confederation throughout Christendom, to be established, not merely for the purpose of counterbalancing popery, but—as he says—to purify, strengthen and unite all true Christian churches in the effort of proclaiming the Gospel among all nations. He tells us that this grand idea originated in the mind of Henderson, and was suggested by him to the Scotch commissioners. The suggestion was afterward presented to the English Parliament, and that body in response directed the Assembly to send the Letter of Greeting already mentioned to the various Reformed churches. The Assembly not only sent the Letter, but forwarded with it the Solemn League and Covenant, as supplying a suitable basis for such organic confederation. The leading divines of the Netherlands not only responded cordially to this Letter, but expressed their willingness to unite with the Presbyterianism of Britain on that basis. How far other Reformed churches responded to this proposal, the subsequent Minutes of the Assembly do not indicate. The disposition of Calvin with respect to such unification of Protestantism was forcibly expressed in his memorable letter to Cranmer, eighty years earlier. One of the marked events of the times, he says, is that the churches are so widely separated from each other that there is not even a temporal or human intercourse carried on between them. . . . The body of Christ is torn asunder because the members are thus separated. When, he adds, our purpose is to unite the sentiments of all good and learned men, and so according to the rule of Scripture to bring the separated churches into one, neither labor nor trouble of any kind ought to be spared. The noble dream of Calvin was not to be realized, even in the seventeenth century. It is probable that the long debates respecting church government, the delay in the formulation of the doctrinal standards, the prolonged struggle with Parliament, and the political agitations and civil wars of the period—not to speak of other causes—rendered difficult if not impracticable any and every scheme for Protestant unification. And when Presbyterianism itself went down in the intestine conflict in Britain, and its representatives were deposed from authority and driven into obscurity or into exile, the possibility of such confederation disappeared altogether. Nor has there ever been an hour in the succeeding centuries, when the hope of Henderson respecting a Protestant Union throughout Europe, mighty in its resistance to Romanism and

unbelief, and mightier still in its missionary efficiency as an agent in bringing the world to Christ, could even approach realization.

7. Permanence and propagation: ecumenical quality and adaptation.

Passing out beyond the century in which the Symbols were written, and beyond the question of their authority and influence in Britain and on the continent of Europe during that eventful century, we come upon a still broader and more intensely practical inquiry,—the inquiry whether these Symbols contain in themselves the elements and potencies requisite to an enduring life and to continuous and cosmic propagation. The permanent vitality and ecumenical influence of the three ancient creeds, and especially of the earliest among them, have often been noted as remarkable. To this day they are not merely monumental records of the Christian faith in the early ages: they are the testimony and pæan of the living church, and are likely to be such through the ages to come. But all creeds do not possess such vitality or wield similar influence. Some of the Protestant Confessions have largely ceased to represent living churches, and are valuable chiefly as mementos of the eras and the conflicts which produced them. Even the Second Helvetic Confession, which Hagenbach describes as truly a theological masterpiece, can hardly be regarded now as a living or potential formulary. Some of these creeds, though still living, have remained within their own provincial domain, and have had little appreciable effect on the developing thought of other lands or times. The Lutheran creeds, as incorporated in the Book of Concord, still retain a measure of authoritative influence, notwithstanding widely variant interpretations and much indifferentism, but are in a degree anachronistic in contents, and make comparatively slight impression beyond the limits of the single nationality that produced them. Gieseler is indeed quoted by Krauth (Conservative Reformation) as claiming that among all the Protestant formularies the Augsburg Confession is the one best fitted to become the theological foundation for union or confederation among the Protestant churches. That claim might have significance if Protestantism were always to remain a mere Protest against the errors of Rome; but the Protestantism of this age, especially as represented in the Reformed communions, with its marked enlargement in experience and activity, and its newer and fresher conceptions of the Gospel, could no more readily accept the Augsburg basis than it could stand on the narrow foundation supplied by the earliest Christian

creed, with its simple recitation of a few essential facts only. Practically useful as the Heidelberg Catechism still is, and winning in its presentations of dogmatic truth, it was framed for a comparatively small sphere, has never traveled except in America far beyond its primitive boundaries, and in its present form could hardly gain more than a limited acceptance anywhere. Surveying the whole field, we are almost led to conclude that—the Symbols of Westminster excepted—the Thirty-Nine Articles, in their Episcopal and eminently in their Wesleyan form, are the only creed which has stood exceptionally the tests of time, which is yet a living and influential exponent of Christian belief, or which seems likely to retain in the future the position it now holds in the land of its origin and in other lands whither it has been transplanted.

These references emphasize the strong statement of Dean Stanley (Memorials of Westminster) that, in spite of what he describes as its sternness and narrowness, the Confession of Westminster alone of all Protestant formularies still retains a firm hold on the minds of its adherents,—a hold to which, he adds, its fervor and its logical coherence in some measure entitle it. It is surprising that so catholic a scholar should not have noted those other qualities which have combined with logical coherence and religious fervor to give the Confession, even above his own ecclesiastical symbol, the peculiar eminence which he assigns to it,—especially that depth of theological insight in which, as he says in another connection, the Confession is far in advance of every other Protestant creed. It cannot, however, be claimed that, tenacious as the hold of the Confession has generally been on those who have once cordially received it as an adequate expression of their personal faith, such eminence has been everywhere and invariably maintained. We are obliged to confess that there was a time in the history of British Presbyterianism when that hold was sadly relaxed, and when even the most distinctive and essential articles in the Confession were rejected, or at least ignored, by men who still called themselves Presbyterian. The history of Christian doctrine has repeatedly shown that fundamental articles of faith which are held at first as glowing verities, warm and invigorating, may harden by degrees through intellectual familiarity or continuous use until they change at length into merely scholastic dogmas, dry and impotent—dogmas which may still elicit a certain formal, perhaps litigious, species of loyalty though they are no longer the living, glorious, potential realities they were when originally discerned and embraced.

Even the central article of justification by faith in Christ only, which all Protestants agreed at first in accepting as Luther and as Calvin stated it, afterwards became in some minds a technical dogma merely, to others a flaunting banner around which zealots shouted—in some cases a matter of disputation rather than faith, and in others an empty sound, of scarcely more significance spiritually than the papal error which that grand truth had supplanted.

The rise of Moderatism in Scotland, originating largely in the Marrow Controversy respecting the place and function of law in Christianity, is a painful illustration of such retrogressive tendencies. The very ardor and positiveness of some in the advocacy of the strong Westminster doctrine especially at this point, by degrees led others to hesitate and question: enthusiastic repetition in some quarters induced satiety and dislike in others; spiritual indifference degenerated into opposition, and loyalty to the truth gradually declined and died away, until within less than a hundred years from the time when the Symbols were unanimously adopted in Scotland as representing the national faith, a considerable body of men had appeared who have been justly described as latitudinarian in doctrine, Erastian in policy, and worldly in life—preachers not of saving truth but of the very morality against which the divines of Westminster had spoken so strenuously. A similar phenomenon appeared in England, but in a form still more painful. Some important doctrines of the Symbols came by degrees to be widely ignored, and others were openly rejected: questioning and speculation led on gradually to positive heresy in matters of most vital moment, until at length—as was said by an ancient historian concerning the early church just prior to the Council of Nicæa—English Presbyterianism woke up during the eighteenth century to find itself in substance Arian, though still retaining its ancestral name. It is difficult to account for such lapses from the intellectual and spiritual vigor which characterized alike the framers of the Symbols and their times. Yet certainly the development of Scotch Moderatism in the presence of a theological system so strong and so animating, was no accident. Nor can such a phenomenon as the cold and dry Arianism that came like a blight upon so many of the churches of England—churches which the members of the Assembly and their associates had planted and nourished into fruitfulness—be regarded as accidental. These results have been explained by some by reference to the very strength, firmness, cogency of the Symbols, or perhaps the rigid

rule of adherence required, as inducing strong aversion to subscription and leading on to positive neglect of it. They have been interpreted by others as simply a revolt of sinful human nature, under cover of a Christian profession, against a type of doctrine which exalted God and made him awful in his decretive sovereignity, while it humbled man, the sinner, in the very dust. Possibly we discern here only a vivid illustration of that general declension in religion, of that worldliness and formalism and low indifference to God and duty and the interests of the soul, which made their appearance in the British Isles during the first part of the eighteenth century, and against which the uprising of Methodism was such a magnificent spiritual protest. However explained, the pitiable fact must be confessed that British Presbyterianism did suffer such a lapse within a single century after its grand formulation, doctrinal and ecclesiastical, in Westminster Abbey.

But on the other hand, no more signal evidence of the inherent vitality and recuperative energy of the doctrinal system there enunciated, can be named than appears in the fact that it not only survived through all the trials that came upon its representatives during the latter half of the seventeenth century, but lived and lived on through the retrogressive tendencies and developments just described. It was a grave disaster to be hurled so suddenly from the throne on which Presbyterianism had hoped to sit as the lawful church of the three realms, and to be cast down and trodden under foot, first by Cromwell and his followers, then by the restored Episcopacy in England. But it was a far graver disaster to find its own adherents becoming indifferent to its name and claims, in some instances lukewarm in its defense, in others abandoning its essential principles,—to see some among them even forsaking the Lord that bought them, and becoming recreant to the cardinal doctrines of sin and depravity by nature, and of redemption through the grace and mediation of a Divine Christ. Yet in Scotland at least the lapse was not to be continuous or total: the heart of the Scotch people still rested on the old Symbols, as it had once rested on the Solemn League and Covenant. Moderatism could not flourish long or extensively in an atmosphere which still was redolent with the fragrance of the names of Knox and Melville, Henderson and Rutherford. Calvinistic Presbyterianism, though suffering from such deteriorating influences, has never been cast down from its high seats of power in Scotland, and now seems likely never to be thus deposed. The firm hold of which Stanley spoke, is a firm hold still; and

notwithstanding the enormous losses which have followed from division after division around issues subordinate if not unimportant, there is small reason to fear that the doctrine and polity which have been supreme so long, will ever be supplanted by Moderatism or by any kindred defection from the ancestral faith. Nor is it an unwarrantable expectation that in England also the Presbyterianism of Westminster, now substantially restored to its original quality, and already strong through the adhesion of a multitude of intelligent and conscientious supporters, may yet become in fact, though never through ecclesiastical supremacy, as great a spiritual and uplifting force as it was at the hour when a blinded Parliament proclaimed it the lawful religion of the British Isles.

The historic transplantation of Presbyterian Calvinism to America, and its development here in various types, was briefly sketched in the introduction to these studies. No more marked illustration of the propagative potency of that system can be imagined than is contained in the wonderful story of that transplantation. The fact of present interest is that Presbyterianism has never lost the hold thus secured. It rather has increased steadily with the national growth, has proved itself capable of continuous and continental diffusion, has become in form and temper native to the soil, has multiplied rapidly in spite of successive schisms and of debilitating separations, has been capable of adjusting its belief and teachings to the demands of its environment, has outrun in its vigorous movement the progress of the country and the age, until it has become, if not in numbers still in standing and influence, one of the most important elements in the religious life of this young continent. The explanation of such a development would require the enumeration of a considerable number of causes, personal, social, political as well as religious, which have been combined providentially in producing the result. It is enough in this connection to advert, in a word, to the power inherent in the adopted Symbols, as one of these efficient causes,—to the system of doctrine as held substantially from the beginning onward, though with degrees of variation and with some measure of conflict. American Presbyterianism has always been essentially Calvinistic rather than Lutheran or Arminian: its prevalent type of Calvinism has always been British more than Continental. Yet while receiving the original Symbols as containing the essential substance of its belief, it has from the first assumed the right to adjust or modify their statements according to its own convictions, and to express these

convictions in its own tongue. It has cherished and emphasized whatever in the ancestral system could be made available in its practical mission, and has freely set aside whatever was not found experimentally to be of value. Its relations to other branches of evangelical Christendom, and also to that great work of continental evangelization in which with other denominations it has been engaged, have compelled it to hold none but a preached and a preachable Calvinism—a Calvinism always supremely concerned with spiritual rather than ecclesiastical interests, ever addressing itself directly to the intellect and heart and conscience of men, and applying the truths embodied in it to the one grand end of human salvation. But its ancestral Symbols have always been its glory, and one of the chief sources of its remarkable influence. Without such a scheme of doctrine, intelligently set forth and earnestly commended, it could never have gained that influence, or won to its banner such a concourse of thoughtful and earnest minds. And certainly it is to its credit that, whatever else may have befallen it, it has never thus far suffered appreciably from the dry rot of Moderatism, or been poisoned by the influx of Arian or humanitarian corruptions. It has been true always and still is true to the substance of its Confession, and herein in a word has lain the central secret of its growth and power.

But Presbyterianism has not been British and American merely: it is in a special degree catholic and ecumenical. Notwithstanding the frequent asseverations and prophecies as to its decadence, and notwithstanding the historic fact that it has not retained the position it once held in certain sections of central Europe, it still is true that no other type of Protestantism has been more widely diffused, has become rooted and prevalent in more countries, or is more nearly cosmopolitan in its movements and conquests. It has been the boast of Rome, that, as the last Vatican Council declared, it is the only type of Christianity which has circumnavigated the globe, and established itself in all the lands and continents of earth—the universal Mother and Teacher of the nations. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that Presbyterian Calvinism is but little less ecumenical than Romanism in the range of its activities. This is not due simply to the fact that, in the order of time, it was the first in the triad of polities, and first in the three types of doctrine, which emerged during the Reformation. It is due rather to the intellectual and moral vitality inherent in the system, and to its quickening effect upon the beliefs and lives of men in many lands. Unquestionably

there are propagative forces in it, not only doctrinal and ecclesiastical but spiritual, which specially empower and qualify it for wide transplantation and for cosmic effectiveness. There is both truth and force in the admission of Dorner, (in his Letter to the Presbyterian Council of 1875) that the Presbyterian churches represent the muscular system in the great body of evangelical Christendom—the principle of powerful movement and initiative. Surely, prophecies that such a type of doctrine and order, animated by such a spirit and purpose, will decline and die out as the Church of Christ moves on toward its millennial maturity, cannot be entertained by intelligent and candid minds.

8. Subscription and Loyalty: their nature and claim.

As we approach the close of these studies in the Symbols of Westminster, and take this final survey of their remarkable career and capabilities, we may well pause for a moment to consider two practical questions—the question of subscription and loyalty to these historic Symbols, and the question of revision and emendation. In the introduction to these Lectures these two questions were briefly discussed with reference to the claims of creeds in general: at this point they justly demand closer consideration in their special relation to these venerable formularies, as constituting the broad and firm basis of doctrine on which Presbyterianism in all its varieties is consciously founded.

The general nature of confessional subscription, as required not from the private membership, but from those who hold official position within the church and are its recognized representatives, is easily seen to be a significant and serious matter. There is implied in it a personal acceptation of the essential truth expressed in the Symbols, and also a voluntary pledge to teach and inculcate that form of truth, so far as the official position of the person subscribing may afford opportunity. It also involves an obligation to stand by the doctrine thus avowed, in positive loyalty, as against both assault from without and heresy and treachery within the church. The covenant is in the nature of an oath or vow, and like other oaths or vows is to be taken—to quote the language of the Confession—in the plain and common sense of the words, *without equivocation or mental reservation;* and being thus taken, it *binds to performance*, and is to be observed with like religious care and faithfulness. Such is the general nature of the subscription required from those who accept office in any Presbyterian communion. It is of course to be granted

that such covenant, though formal in character and binding in force, does not require that the allegiance pledged shall manifest itself in partizanship or sectarian zeal, or in any other way that is inconsistent with that spiritual comity which binds all Christian churches in loving union, however widely they may vary in their expositions of the essential doctrines embodied in the Gospel. It is also obvious that this covenant cannot invade the proper domain of conscience, or involve control over personal liberty or conviction in matters of faith. Confessional subscription is never compulsory, but is always the free act of a willing mind—a mind which has first of all cordially believed what it professes, and then truly pledges itself to uphold and promulgate what it has professed: Innes, Law of Creeds.

The right of the Presbyterian church to require such subscription to its avowed creed from those who seek to become teachers or governors within its domain, is a just corollary from its right and its obligation to formulate openly and before all men its cherished beliefs. An an organized witness for God and his saving Truth—appointed under the commission of Christ to teach all nations in his name, it is not only justified in bearing but is sacredly bound to bear its testimony to the truth in all available forms. What was said in the outset of these studies respecting the nature, functions and values of church creeds has especial significance here. Nor is it to be claimed that this function and duty should be limited to the expression of only such biblical doctrines as are held substantially by all evangelical communions alike. Presbyterianism owes it not only to itself as a matter of interior conviction, but also and eminently to the common Christianity, to hold forth openly, without fear or question, that special system of Calvinistic or Augustinian doctrine to which it adheres as being in its judgment the best human expression yet discovered of the essential teachings of Holy Writ. It cannot pursue any other policy without proving both false to its cherished belief, and unfaithful to the best development, the broadest culture, of the whole Church of Christ. And it may therefore justly demand that those who minister at its altars or bear rule within its fold, shall be true and loyal in their acceptance of that system, and shall so far as they are able become its messengers in both proclamation and defence. This right is in fact very rarely challenged except by persons who, while desirous of enjoying the position or advantages which official station within the church may bestow, are more or less conscious of lack of adequate, loving faith in the doctrines which they have formally covenanted to

uphold. The church assuredly has the right not only to inscribe its cherished belief over the door of admission to its administrative fellowship, but also by that sign to test the loyalty of all who wish to become its teachers or its representatives in government. It is not to be assumed that there are no limits to the exercise of such a prerogative; due regard to circumstance, occasion, individual claims and convictions, is of course requisite. But the general right and duty are beyond question. And in their enforcement the church puts no constraint upon the individual—compels no one to serve it officially; the entire transaction on both sides is a transaction in liberty. And he who is unwilling to submit to the just condition imposed, is free to go forth in peace, and find elsewhere some other formulary of faith to which he can in good conscience subscribe.

Granted the general right to impose such subscription, it may be further noted that considerable variety exists in the various Presbyterian communions, with respect to the degree of strictness with which this ecclesiastical requisition is enforced. The Appendix to the Proceedings of the Second Presbyterian Alliance (1880) contains an extensive and valuable account of the formulas of subscription adopted by the various churches represented in that organization. In some of the smaller and imperfectly constituted churches, especially on the continent of Europe, where Calvinism itself is but inadequately received and cherished, such subscription seems little more than a ceremonial act. In the Reformed Church of Geneva, for example, ministers sitting in the very chair of Calvin are required only to pledge themselves to teach and preach conscientiously, according to their light and faith, the Christian truth contained in the Scriptures. Other communions might be named which, taking the opposite extreme, maintain that the Symbols should be received and held—as the reactionary Synod of Philadelphia affirmed in 1736—without the least variation or alteration. But, to hold so comprehensive and complex a Confession as that of Westminster in this way, has been found to be wholly impracticable, and the ipsissima verba rule has given way therefore, for the most part, to the requirement that the system of doctrine contained in the Confession—its essential Calvinism—shall be honestly and cordially received as expressing the substance of sacred doctrine derived from Holy Scripture. Two special facts should be thoughtfully noted here: first, that the spirit of the present age, in Presbyterian circles as elsewhere, as contrasted with the temper of the seventeenth or even the eighteenth century, is irreconcilably adverse to all narrow or

dogmatic domination by the church, as well in subscription as in belief. And secondly, that some broadening of the rule becomes more and more needful as any branch of the church like our own grows in numbers and area, comprises a wider variety of material and machinery, becomes continental rather than insular or provincial in its activities.

Yet honest loyalty to the Symbols is no less requisite now than in the era of the Assembly, and in the larger as well as the smaller Presbyterian communions. Such loyalty while it does not call for blind devotion or morbid reverence for the Symbols, or justify a disposition to enforce their claim to the letter, even with the power of the keys, obviously excludes on the other hand all inclination to regard subscription with indifference as a mere form, all disposition to treat the covenant of allegiance with levity, all readiness to criticize or oppose, and all exaltation of personal opinion or personal prerogatives in any temper of egotism. True loyalty not only embraces and appropriates the doctrine accepted, but commends it by argument and influence, defends it against both heresy and outward assault, and upholds it, as the soldier carries high his banner, without fear and without shame. And surely it is no discredit to the Presbyterianism of this age that, following the example of the faithful divines of Westminster, it is animated, perhaps appreciably more than any other section of Protestantism, by this believing, loving, loyal temper toward its revered Symbols,—even though that temper should sometimes show itself in excessive or even offensive form. There is force at this point as at many others in the counsel of the Apostle to the Galatian church: It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing—zealously sought in a good matter.

9. Revision of the Symbols: grounds and limitations.

The second practical question waiting for consideration relates to the revision or emendation of these cherished Symbols, together with the justifying grounds for such revision, and the regulative principles involved in it. Amendments to the three ancient creeds of Christendom, notwithstanding their intrinsic incompleteness and their obvious inadequacy as expressions of the belief of living churches in this age, is manifestly impossible for the reason that no authority competent to enact amendments now exists. Explanations, such as those appended to the clause, He descended into hell, may be supplied by any ecclesiastical body that feels the need of such comment; but the nature of these primitive creeds and their ecumenical relations forbid all attempts at structural change, whether by omission or

addition. The symbols of Rome are also irreformable, excepting through the superaddition of such affirmations as, for example, the immaculacy of Mary, for the reason that the papal church is by its own traditions forever disqualified to change any dogma once enunciated by its supreme authorities, acting, as is claimed, under the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost. Protestantism has in some instances, as in early Lutheranism, explained one creed by the formulation of another, designed for the definition or the expansion of the doctrines contained in the first symbol. In other instances, as in the United and the Free churches of Scotland, the desired end has been secured through the introduction of interpretative declarations, modifying or expanding the original formulary. For the most part, the Protestant churches, while recognizing somewhat the need of emendation in some form, have preferred to let their creeds, lustrous still with the glories of the Reformation, stand as originally framed,—tacitly allowing modifications or divergences to exist without challenge so long as these were not subversive of their cherished formularies as at first received.

It will be remembered that the Westminster Assembly itself began its doctrinal procedure by an attempt to reconstruct the Thirty-Nine Articles, and gave up the task only when it became apparent that the formulating of a new creed was preferable. American Presbyterianism assumed from the first the right to revise the original Symbols, and in the Adopting Act of 1729 did change materially so much of the Confession as affirmed the right or duty of civil magistrates to exercise control in ecclesiastical affairs, and also so much of the Larger Catechism as related to the toleration of false religions. The Synod of 1758 endorsed this action, and the first General Assembly formally incorporated these amendments in the revised Symbols. Extensive alterations were also made in the Form of Government and the Directory for Worship, in the interest of greater equity in ecclesiastical administration, and of liberty in public devotions. It was also made a constitutional rule that further revision might be made at any time thereafter under certain prescribed conditions; and various instances of emendation, in pursuance of this prerogative, appear in the subsequent records of the church.

The right of the Presbyterian communions to modify or alter, or even to expunge, their doctrinal formularies is, like the right to interpret the Scriptures, a cardinal prerogative—a right inherent and unchallengeable. It is like the right to form an entirely new creed, whenever in the judgment of the church such a creed

should become necessary as a formal declaration of existing belief. Rainy (Development of Christ. Doctrine) justly maintains that revision ought not to be regarded as a singular and revolutionary step, but rather as something belonging to the ordinary and recognized responsibilities of the church. But on the other hand he emphasizes the obvious truth, that tenderness and reverence are justly due to the Symbols in themselves,—due also to the feelings with which they are regarded on account of the interests connected with them, and due to the sacred verities which they have been the mouthpiece to express. He further admits that the proposal to revise the Symbols would be regarded by most of the Presbyterian bodies in Britain as a revolutionary measure, opening the way—as he says—to unimaginable possibilities. It will readily be granted that the right of revision is one which from the nature of the case cannot be exercised frequently, or for slight reasons. Casual or miscellaneous changes could not fail to weaken the hold of the Symbols, both on those who publicly adhere to them, and on those who from the outside are disposed to regard them with favor. Reckless and persistent agitation in the interest of emendation, even where such improvement is confessed to be desirable, could result only in disorder and disloyalty, and might end even in denominational disintegration. Yet the dangers of revision cannot annul the inherent right of the church to determine just when and how, and to what extent it will investigate, supervise, modify, reconstruct, or even cast aside, its creed.

Respecting the extent, conditions and temper of such revision, no universal rule or principle can be prescribed. Revision may be limited simply to the alteration or elimination of language which in the process of time has assumed an equivocal or illusory meaning, or is suggestive of some speculative or practical error. It may extend to the striking out of particular statements which in their substance or in their confessional form are not in fact held or taught by the living church. It may include such new combinations or adjustments of the received truth as shall be fitted to produce other and better impressions on the popular mind. It may involve additions less or more extensive, which shall modify or broaden that creed, and make it a more influential exponent of the doctrines held by the church. And further, whatever the form or reach of such revision, success in it must in any given instance depend largely on a variety of special conditions. The church may, for example, be so circumstanced that discussion in the interest of change might precipitate mis-

chiefs more serious than any which the recognized confessional imperfections may involve. Just as there are many men who see and deplore evils personal or social which they still feel themselves incompetent to correct, so the church though admitting the deficiencies of its creed, may yet be conscious of incompetency to face the extraordinary task of emendation. It is not given to every age to improve upon the ages that have preceded it, even though it be able to discern their imperfections or to lament them. There must also be such a measure of conscious agreement beforehand in respect to the amendments suggested as shall render it probable, if not certain, that unity, strength, fresh inspiration rather than disagreement, conflict, ultimate rupture, shall follow upon the effort. And it may well be added that so delicate and difficult a task as the amending of a venerated creed requires in those who make the attempt, not only large philosophic ability, adequate theological and historical knowledge, and thoughtful appreciation of the nature of the work imposed, but also such depth of spiritual experience, such a degree of maturity in the Christian life, such a sense of special communion with God, and such intimacy with his Word, as shall qualify them personally to perform that task with success to the edifying and enlargement of the church.

An interesting illustration of these statements comes into view in the recent attempt at revision within our own communion. This attempt is the more notable as being, aside from certain Declaratory Acts previously adopted in Scotland, the first effort of any section of Protestantism since the Reformation to scrutinize throughout its venerable creed, with a view to improvement at all points where improvement might seem to be demanded. The motives and intentions of parties interested in the effort were somewhat varied. It may be that there were some among the advocates of that revision, who were animated by more or less conscious hostility in general to the Calvinism so strongly imbedded in the Symbols. There were some who regarded the Confession in its present elaborate and dogmatic form as repressive of free thought, and as a ready instrument of ecclesiastical tyranny, and on such grounds sought its emendation. Others preferred a less extensive and complex creed, and desired simply such omissions and abbreviations as would both reduce the Confession in bulk and increase its practical usefulness as representative of the present belief. Many sought emendation in order to secure thereby the correction of objectionable language or expression, or the elimination of certain parts or aspects of the

system of doctrine to which they were in conscience opposed. Many more desired the revision for the purpose of adding to the Confession important truths not sufficiently recognized in it, and of such improvement at all needful points as would bring it into more manifest harmony with the actual faith and teaching of the church.

The story of the process, profoundly interesting as it is, cannot be recited here. Under the rigid constitutional rule imposed, by which even a distinct majority of the judicatories of the church are unable to secure confessional change, the effort was unsuccessful, and the Symbols therefore remain as aforetime. Yet it is clear that the interpretations given to them in that revision, and the additions suggested, and the fresh and generous temper which diffused itself throughout the revised statement, have much more than compensated the denomination for the agitation and the labor which the movement involved. Our beloved church will always be broader and freer, more practical and earnest and spiritual, more irenic in its teaching and more friendly in its relations to all other evangelical sections of Protestantism, for the experience and the lessons which that noteworthy effort taught it. Other divisions of the Presbyterian family in America and on other continents cannot fail to be aided and stimulated by the new conceptions of the essential Calvinism, embodied in the revision proposed. And it may even be anticipated that this introductory effort, though for the time a formal failure, may become the precursor of an ecumenical emendation on the part of universal Presbyterianism, which shall remove existing defects in the Symbols, and shall present them to coming ages as a Holy Confession in which evangelical Christendom of whatever name shall in spirit if not in exact form be heartily conjoined.

A final word: For those who bear office in any Presbyterian communion, and especially for the ministry, the only wise and just attitude toward the Symbols and the system of doctrine contained in them, is one of considerate, mediated, comprehending loyalty and service. Their course must be marked by thoughtful, scholarly, just conservatism on one hand, and by cordial and free, though careful movement along the true historic line of progress on the other. On one side they are bound to be in loving sympathy with the noble heritage they have received,—firmly to hold the truths established, diligently to study and proclaim them,—free alike from blind devotion and from presumptuous conceit and an ambitious desire for innovation,—veering and swerving with no transient gusts of popular opinion, but ever

standing firm and strong on the solid foundation of the ages. On another side they are bound to be quick always in discerning the truth in fresh lights and in larger relations, to welcome new truth in whatsoever aspect, to be diligent in studying all possible adjustments or improvements of sacred doctrine, and in giving to such doctrine nobler form, completer expression,—ever remembering that the Truth of God is too great to be fully comprehended in any creed or by any human mind, and that the worthiest attitude of Christian wisdom is the attitude of thoughtful reverence, of adoring faith. The original Directory for Worship, springing from the heart as well as brain of the Assembly, happily describes that attitude in language which might well be written in letters of gold for the guidance of the Presbyterian ministry in all lands and times:

It is presupposed that the minister of Christ is in some good measure gifted for so weighty a service, by his skill in the original languages, and in such arts and sciences as are handmaids unto divinity; by his knowledge in the whole body of theology, *but most of all in the holy Scriptures; having his senses and heart exercised in them above the common sort of believers; and by the illumination of the Spirit of God, and other gifts of edification which (together with reading and studying of the Word) he ought still to seek by prayer and an humble heart,*—resolving to admit and receive any truth not yet attained, whenever God shall make it known unto him.

INDEX.

Ability of will, natural, 243, 290; moral, 292; mutable 254; gracious, 379; gift of the Spirit, 423, 472.

Absolution, priestly, forbidden, 487; Zwingli, Calvin, Luther on, 487; not a sacrament, 670.

Acceptance, how distinct from pardon, 442; person as well as acts involved, 442; mediation of Christ imputed, 443; evangelical obedience not the ground, 443; creed statements respecting, 443; Sum of Saving Knowledge on, 443.

Adam, public or representative person, 259; the Adamic headship, 260.

Adopting Act, 58; subsequent division respecting, 59; final basis, 60, 836.

Adoption defined, sonship through grace, 449; relations to justification, 450; privileges and spirit of, 451; Owen, Watson on, 450.

Adoptionism, on person of Christ, 316.

Adultery, prime ground of divorce, 594.

Advent Second, *see* Christ, final Advent.

Agape, not a biblical ordinance, 692.

Agnosticism defined; varieties of, 144; an unwarrantable hypothesis, 144.

Allæosis, Zwinglian theory, 316.

Amending church creeds, when justified, 14; amending the Symbols, 835.

American Presbyterianism, its implantation, 58; doctrinal basis, 58; conflicts respecting subscription, 59; alterations in the Symbols, 59, 572; divisions, varieties, 60; remarkable growth, 830; present position and influence, 831.

Anabaptist errors, respecting kingship of Christ, 340; liberty, 559.

Angels, their creation, number, endowments, 205; fall of angels, 206; employment of holy, 206; reprobate, 777; arraigned at final judgment 777; their condemnation, 778; *see* Satan.

Annihilationism, 745; error shown, 746; Edwards on, 747.

Anselm, on the origin of souls, 250; Cur Deus Homo, satisfaction of Christ, 336.

Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas, on justification, 447; defects in their conception, 448.

Anthropology, Lecture Fifth, 237-301.

Anthropomorphism, Anthropopathism, biblical, 141.

Antichrist, biblical allusions to, 23; the papacy as antichrist, 656; other antichrists, 657; overthrow of, 731.

Antinomian error, 554.

Antiquity of the human race, 240; biblical chronology, how estimated, 240; signs of antiquity considered, 240; present state of the question, 241.

Apocryphal books, their claim, 95; Roman view of, 96; Protestant rejection, reasons, 97; confessional teaching, 97; Augustine on, 95.

Apollinarianism, doctrine respecting Christ, 317.

Apostles, their office; temporary, 635; apostolical succession, 635.

Apostles' Creed, 24; Augustine on, 24; its Christology, 311; unchangeable, 835.

Apostolicity, a test of Scripture, 103.

Aquinas, on the origin of souls, 250; on certainty of salvation, 496.

Archer, John, his book burned, 536.

Argyle, on primeval man, 247.

Arius and Arianism, person of Christ, 306; English Presbyterianism once Arian, 828.

Arminianism, 30; its developments, 179; on moral state of infants, 281; divine ground of election, 389; perseverance unto life, 495; assurance of salvation, 501: *see* Remonstrance.

Arnold, Matthew, on power working for righteousness, 296.

Arrowsmith, on the extent of grace, 812.

Ascension of Christ, 347; his entrance into heaven; estate of exaltation, 349.

Assurance of final salvation, 496; false views guarded against, 500; not obtained by revelation, 500; true and sufficient grounds, 501.

Athanasian Creed, (Quicunque) 24.

Atheism, incredible, 127; condemned in first commandment, 525.

Atonement, not a confessional term; *see* Satisfaction.

Attributes of God defined, constitutional, 142; moral, 142; may be known, 143.

Auburn Declaration, 36; on original sin, 275; infants as sinful, 282; election tested by fruits, 393.

Augsburg Confession, 29; general character and value, 39, 826; influence in England, 796; Gieseler on, 826; on the Scriptures, 82; God defined in, 125; freedom and sin, 224; origin of sin, 264; the fall, 267; civil righteousness, 279; infants dying in infancy,

280; free will, 293; Christology, 303; Holy Spirit, 411; saving faith, 474; repentance, 483; good works, 489; obedience to the law, 511; civil rule of popes, 575; celibacy, 593; marks of the true church, 603; church membership, 626; prayers to saints, 704; millennarianism condemned, 726; final consummation, 726; purgatory, 753.

Augustine, on the Apostles' Creed, 24; inspiration, 89; polytheism, 132; our knowledge of God, 143; the trinity in man, 162; the six creative days, 202; origin of souls, 250; origin of sin, 255; original sin, 274; reprobation, 335; salvability of heathen, 425; justification, 447; the commandments, 521; church invisible, 606; sacraments, 669; purgatory, 758; spiritual presence of Christ, 766; self-condemnation at the final judgment, 778; the earth purified by fire for the holy, 788.

Authenticity defined, 102.

Authoritativeness of Scripture, 104; divinely ordained rule of life, 106; contrasted with churchly tradition, 108; Roman and Protestant doctrine contrasted, 109.

Baillie, Letters, on the Jerusalem Chamber, 44; on the debates, 54; religious character of the Assembly, 54; version of Rous, 715; personal temper in discussion, 802.

Ball, covenant of grace, 259, 361.

Bannerman, on uses of creeds, 9; scriptural doctrine of the church, 649.

Baptism, definition of the sacrament, 674; its significance, inward and outward, 675; confessional statements, 675; its spiritual nature, 676; how related to regeneration, 677.

Baptism, question of mode, 677; what is essential in mode, 677; superadded forms forbidden, 677; baptism by heretics invalid, 677; Roman baptism valid, 677; varieties of mode legitimate,—position of the Assembly, 678; biblical argument as to mode, 679; primitive church usage, 679; historic testimonies; Protestant usage, 679; Calvin on, 679; administered but once, 679; churchly observance, 679; may not be neglected, 680.

Baptism, subjects, 680; in adults, personal faith requisite, 680; ingrafting into Christ, 680; applicable to infants of believers, 681; not because of saving efficacy, 681; Roman and earlier Protestant error, 682; parental faith essential, 683; the sanctified family recognized, 683; Abrahamic covenant,—illustrated in circumcision, 683; Christ blessing little children, 683; Paul on federal holiness, 683; general Protestant doctrine, 684; values of the observance, 684.

Baptismal regeneration, 436; Roman and other error, 676.

Barclay, on the church, 604.

Baxter, his estimate of the Assembly, 790; his theological position, 790; Stanley, tribute to, 790.

Beattie, values of Presbyterianism, 651.

Begotten, meaning of the term, 167; applied to Christ, 306.

Being of God, 130; being, distinguished from attributes, 143.

Belgic Confession, 80; on the Scriptures, 86; the Apocrypha, 97; creation, 197; fallen angels, 206; man as created, 247; two natures in Christ, 317; election, 384; preterition, 396; saving faith, 475; uses of the moral law, 516; marks of the true church, 605; sacraments, 672; final consummation, 727; the earth purified by fire, 788.

Belief, *see* Faith, Saving Faith.

Bellarmine, on justification, 459; marks of the church, 605.

Bernard, progress of doctrine in the N. T. 287.

Best, Paul, trial for heresy, 536.

Bible, Protestant estimate of, 66; British Prot., 67; a truly divine book, 89; a book for humanity, 104; its own interpreter, 110; Bible and the church, 114; Holy Spirit interprets, 119; both history and prophecy, 722; all past and all future included, 722. *See,* Scripture Holy.

Blackstone, on the civil Sabbath, 535.

Briggs, religious character of the Assembly, 55.

British Confessions, 89; their general character, 41.

Burnet, on the inerrancy of Scripture, 88.

Bushnell, on union with Christ through faith, 477; Christian nurture, 662.

Butler, on the limits of reason, 72; possibility of miracle, 220; divine providence, 221; moral government, 235, 294, 514; Christ as a teacher, 330; necessity for mediation, 337; providential election, 385; future punishment, 780.

Calamy, provisions of grace universal, 376; reprobate contemplated, 813.

Call, external, 424; effectual call, 428; call to the ministry, 631, 698.

Calvin, his character, 155, 351, 607; generosity, 155; interest in sinners, 155; loyalty to truth, 435; catholicity, 825; influence, 607; in Britain, 796; his theological system, 155, 559, 565, 808.

Calvin, on the divine benevolence, 154; the persons in the Trinity, 164; God as providential ruler, 180; the eternal decree, 194; image of God in man, 243; origin of souls, 250; original sin, 272; sin as rebellion against God, 287; the incarnation, 309; three offices of Christ, 325; Christ as supreme teacher, 330; his kingship, 340; aim of the Gospel, 369; election, 395; reprobation, 397; potency of Gospel truth, 435; acceptable repentance, 488; auricular confession, 487; law of God defined, 514; uses of the moral law, 516; law of the Sabbath, 533;

reverence to parents, 538; Christian liberty, 559; liberty of conscience, 560; religious vows, 583; priestly celibacy, 592; church visible and invisible, catholic, 606; church membership, 626; Christian ministry, 631, 698; apostacy of Rome, 657 missions, 664; baptism, mode, 679; definition of a sacrament, 688; eucharist, its meaning, 688; liturgy, 720; psychopannychism 749; spiritual presence of Christ, 767; resurrection, 770; final Messianic act, 786; on the unification of Protestantism, 825.

Calvinism, as a system, 823; its strength, 808; development, 814; diffusion, 831; its future, 809.

Cambridge Platform, basis of church government, 647.

Canon of Scripture, 92; O. T. canon, 93; N. T. canon, 94; Councils of Hippo and Carthage on, 98; canonical books of Protestantism, 98; question still in a sense open, 98.

Canonicity, tests of, 98; external and internal, 99; Roman assumption, 98; definition, 102.

Canons of belief, 7; *see* Creeds.

Carlstadt, on the ministry, 698.

Carlyle, on evolution, 131; value of Shorter Catechism, 177; immanence of God, 210.

Catechisms of the Reformation, 629, 663; of Britain, Bonar, 64; Longer and Shorter, 50; Mitchell, Schaff on, 64; their scope and value, 177, 663.

Catholicity illustrated, 819; of Calvin, 825.

Cause and Causes, 148; second causes, nature, 190, 221; variety, 191; human will, as cause, 191, 811.

Celibacy, abstinence from marriage, 590; origin in false views of marriage, 591; supposed religious privilege, 591; imposed as a duty, Roman dogma, 591; Protestant condemnation, confessional testimony, 592.

Ceremonial law prefiguring Christ, 515; abrogated under the Gospel, 515.

Chalcedon, Council of, on the two natures in Christ, 315; reproduced in the Confession, 315.

Chalmers, on sin as a disease, and its cure, 408.

Channing, on the nature of salvation, 353.

Charnock, on the divine holiness, 157.

Children, fifth commandment, 536; duties to parents, 587.

CHRIST THE MEDIATOR, Lecture Sixth, 302–351.

Christ, Son of God, eternal existence of, 305; eternal sonship, 307; proofs of full deity, 307; two natures in Christ incarnate, 308; one person only, 313; creeds on, 314; various errors, Arianism, 306; Eutychianism, 314; Nestorianism, 315; Adoptionism, 316.

Christ, as Mediator, 322; prophet, 328; priest and sacrifice, 332; king, 337; his humiliation, 344; exaltation, 347; as intercessor, 349; his resurrection, evidences of, 771.

Christ, final advent, 764; always present spiritually, 763; always coming to believers and the church, 766; a final coming in visible form, 767; at the end of the world, 768; as judge, 348, 768; surrendery of the kingdom, 786.

Christian doctrine, a mighty power, 434; teaching of the Reformers, Calvin, 435.

Christianity and the State, 598; mutual relations and duties, 599; compared with natural faiths, 371; mission to and in society, 665; its ultimate triumph in the world, 729.

Christianized manhood, 503; same in all ages, 504; coronation of humanity, 553.

Christian Liberty, liberty toward God, 557; secured in and through Christ, 557; enlarged under the Gospel, 558; not license, anabaptist error, 559; Calvin on, 559.

Christian Worship, its elements, 702; adoration, nature and duty, 703; Trinity to be adored, 708; conditions of acceptable adoration, 704; adoration of saints and angels forbidden, 704; where offered, social worship enjoined, 705; elements of worship; fasting, thanksgiving, offerings, 706; reading of Scripture, preaching, 707; right hearing of the Word, Luther on, 711; confessional injunctions, 712; prayer in worship, its elements, 713; confession of sin, 713; giving of thanks, 713; singing in worship, 714; Rous, version, 715; adopted in Scotland, 715.

Christian Year, 721.

Christocentric theology; person of Christ, central and regulative fact, 350.

Christology of the Reformation, 308; ancient doctrine affirmed, 303; Protestant formularies on, 303; Socinian and other aberrations, 304.

Christus pro nobis, 407, 459; in nobis, 459.

Chronology of the Bible, 240.

CHURCH OF GOD, Lecture Twelfth, 601–666.

Church, definition of, 602; Roman and Protestant conceptions, 602; signs or marks of the true, according to Rome, 605; to Protestantism, 605; catholic or universal, 606; Luther, Calvin, on, 606; visible and invisible, Augustine and Calvin, 607; marks of the church invisible, 607; of the visible church, 607; not two churches, but one, 610.

Church, historic development, 612; a supernatural institution, 612; constructively in human nature, 612; essential to preservation and diffusion of religion, 613; God glorified in and through the church, 613; church founded at creation, 613; three eras in its history; Patriarchal, 614; Hebraic, 615; Christian, 615; one and the same organism throughout, 615; providential care of, in all ages, 227.

Church administration, its warrant, 636;

three general ends in, 637.
Church Censures, defined, 641; right to inflict, ends to be sought in, 641; grades in penalty; suspension, excommunication, 642; restoration to church privileges, 642.
Church Councils, Protestant teaching, 643; their proper sphere, 644; how appointed, 645; uses and dangers of, 645.
Church growth, promise of, 660; specific features of, 661; forces and agencies in, 662; two laws of growth; interior, spiritual propagation, 662; Roman and Protestant methods, 663; exterior law, spiritual conquest, 664; Roman error; Protestant efficiency, 664; church a missionary agency.
Church membership, 624; in the early church, 625; in the Roman communion, 625; Protestant churches, 626; Calvin, Edwards, on, 627; membership of baptized children, 627; based not on baptism, but on family relation, 628; constructive and preparatory, 629; right and duty of the church toward, 629; conversion requisite to full communion, 630.
Church and state, 47, 568; early Protestant view, 569; discussion and action in Britain, 569; conflicts in the Assembly, 570; American Presbyterianism, 572; mutual duties of church and state, 599.
Cicero, on the origin of souls, 249; laws as the nerves of states, 514; immortality, 741.
Civil Magistracy, 567; nature and scope of the authority, 569; confessional statements, 569; American doctrine, 572.

CIVIL RELATIONS AND DUTIES, Lecture Eleventh, 556–600.

Clarendon, estimate of the Assembly, 789.
Coke, on false swearing, 579.
Coleridge, on faith and reason, 479.
Common Grace; the outward call, 424; its range, 425; why not effectual, 428; human treatment of, 428: *see* Grace.
Communion of Saints, 616; Pearson, Leighton on, 617; limited to fellowship in this life, 618; mutual privileges and duties, 618; community of goods not required, 619; extent of communion, universal, 619.
Communion with the Spirit, 473; liability to error, 474.
Comparative symbolism, its value, 2, 36; comparisons of creeds, 25, 31, 799, 826.
Concubinage in whatever form sinful, 590; corrupting influence of, 590.
Concupiscentia, Roman and Protestant view, 546; Greek church on, 547.
Conditional Immortality; soul not intrinsically immortal, 745; immortality for the righteous only, 745; the wicked annihilated, 745; false interpretations of Scripture, 746; philosophic objections to, 746; no warrant in the creeds, 747.
Confession of sin, 484; Roman dogma, auricular confession, 487; confessional unwarranted, 486; Moehler, Calvin on, 487; Protestant doctrine of confession, 487, 713; confession an element in worship, 715.
Confessions of the Reformation defined, *see* Creeds. Lutheran, 29; Reformed, 29; British, 30; later, 30; compared with ancient creeds, 25; compared with one another, 31, 799.
Congregationalism, Amer.; adoption of the Symbols, 60; recent declarations of faith, 36; agreements with Presbyterianism, 650.
Conscience, liberty of, 560; fundamental in Protestantism, 560; God alone Lord of, 561; involves responsibility, 561; never to be compromised, 562; conscience and the state, 562.
Conversion described, 431; correlative to regeneration, 432; man not passive in, 433; truth an instrument, 433; other instrumentalities, 435; fancied substitutes for conversion, 371.
Consummation, the ultimate, 786; surrendery of the kingdom, 787.
Conviction of sin, nature and signs, 482; false conviction, Judas, 483.
Cotton, John, Covenant of grace, 361.
Councils, *see* Synods, 642.
Covenant, meaning of the term, 255; Coccian doctrine of the covenants, 258.
Covenant of works, or life, 253; its purpose, 256; its condition,—the test imposed, 257; relations to the race, 259.
Covenant of grace, 361; origin of the doctrine, 361; Ball, John Cotton, on, 361; made with believers, in Christ, 364.
Covenant of redemption, 358; Father and Son, in the interest of salvation, 358; error of excessive analysis, 359; deficiency in the conception, 360.
Coveting forbidden in all varieties, 543.
Creation, false views respecting, 195; referred to the triune God, 170, 196; fatherhood specially revealed in, 197; confessional statements, 198; process of, 199; word of power, 199; from nothing, 200; six creative days, 202; extent of creation, 208; its quality, 208; end of God in creation, 211.
Creation of man, 204; of angels, 205; of both the material and the moral universe, 207; divine glory revealed in all, 212.
Creationism defined, 248; its claim examined, 249.
Credibility of Scripture, its basis, 105.
Creeds defined, 6; necessity for, exterior, interior, 7; formulation of, 9; limitations involved, 9; imperfections in, 12; emendation, 14; authoritativeness, 15; law of loyalty, 17; objections to, 18; tyranny of, 20. *Also*, right of Presbyterian church to frame its Symbols, 833; to require loyalty to, 834; to amend, 835.
Creeds, historic, 20; creed element in Scripture, 21; first creed period, 23; second, 29; creedless period, first; causes, 26; second;

explanation, 35; the three ancient creeds, 24; contents and limitations, 25; creeds of the Reformation, four groups, 29; their confessional value, 31; hierarchal creeds, Greek, Roman, 33; erratic and heretical creeds, 33; *see* Confessions.
Cudworth, on mediation of Christ, 321.
Cumberland church, on the divine decree, 400; election and preterition, 401.
Cunningham, on the unity in God, 161; supremacy of Scripture in the church, 658; Roman error as to the eucharist, 685.
Curse, the,—generically, death, 269; fourfold aspect, 269; on Adam, on Eve, on Satan and the serpent, 270; on the earth, 271.
Cyril Lucaris, faith universal in man, 478.
Cyprian, sphere of the Spirit, 416; salvation through the church only, 609; the Christian ministry, 681.

Death, bodily, 269; spiritual, 270; physical death, its features, 737; relations to sinfulness, 269, 737; universal, 738; death of infants, of the heathen, of the impenitent, 738; of Christians, 739; naturalistic views of, 740.
Decalogue, 519; *see* Ten Commandments.
Decree and Decrees, defined, 181; synonyms, 181; the decree eternal, 182; unconditioned and unchangeable, 183; all-inclusive, supreme, 184; expresses the divine perfections, 185.
Decrees, plural, defined, 185; order of the, 187; supralapsarian, sublapsarian, statement, 187; various modes of executing, 190; divine purpose and temper in executing, 193; moral quality of the decrees, 193; permissive decree respecting sin, 192; remarks on the doctrine, 810.
Deism defined; values and defects, 72.
Depravity, not a confessional term, 276; caution needful in defining, 277; in what sense total, utter, universal, 277; Roman dogma, confessional teaching, 279; objections considered, 279.
Descensus ad Inferos, various interpretations, 846; perplexity and mystery of the phrase, 847; close of the humiliation of Christ, 547.
Dickson, *see* Truth's Victory Over Error.
Digest, Presb., 1898, on religious liberty, 573; making oath, 578; divorce, 597; discipline, 641; removing censures, 641; Presbyterian polity, 647.
Design, the argument from, 128.
Directory for Worship, formulation, 47, 56; instructions on sacraments, 674; elements of worship, 706; reading of Scripture, 707; preaching 710; prayer, 229, 714; praise, 714; general value, 793.
Discipline, nature, 638; ends sought in, scope of, 640; proper spirit in, 641; censures, nature and extent, 641.
Dispensations, the three, 367; dispensation of the Spirit, 416.
Divine truth, in conversion, 433; its intrinsic potency, 434; Spirit in and with, 435.
Divorce, defined, 593; not private; both church and state involved, 593; legitimate grounds of, 594; adultery, willful desertion, 595; other grounds recognized in civil law, 596; flagrant errors, 596; duty of the church, 597; Woolsey on, 594.
Doctrine defined, 3; primary and secondary meanings, 4; History of, to be studied, 5; its relations to symbolic theology, 5.
Dominion of God absolute, 137; its foundations, 138; dominion of man over nature, 244.
Dorner, on the canonical books, 92; the covenant theology, 259; infants dying in infancy, 280; the kenosis, 313; the three offices, 325; future of the earth, 788; on the efficiency of Presbyterianism, 832.
Dort, Synod of, 30; character and influence, 791, 823; Baxter, on, 791; on salvation of infants, 281; predestination unto life, 357; sovereignty in election, 389; preterition, 396; regeneration, 431; perseverance of saints, 496; Sabbath observance, 582; spread of the Gospel, 661; right hearing of the Word, 712; preterition, 812.
Dualism, simplest form of polytheism, 182.
Durie, treatise on the unity of Protestantism, 823; his active efforts toward, 824.
Duty, obligation, defined, 299; supremacy of the law of, 519.

Earth, future of the, 728, 787; Van Oosterzee, Dorner, Edwards on, 788.
Edwards, on end of God in creation, 212; divine providence, 222; original sin, 274; satisfaction of Christ, 337; election, 384; qualifications for church membership, 627; acceptable praise, 713; conversion of the world, 780; duration of the millennium, 732; annihilation of the wicked, 747; future of the earth, 788.
Edwards, Jr., on Improvements in Theology, made by his father, 814.
Effectual Calling, defined, 428; its elements, 429; work of the Spirit, 429; Protestant creeds, 430; Irish Articles, 431: *see* Regeneration.
Election, its place in the divine decree, 382; predestination, foreordination, 384; a fact in providence, 385; in the religious sphere, 385; biblical teaching respecting, 386; its motive in God alone, 387; originating in love, 387; its equity and sovereignty, 388; not conditioned on foreseen faith, 389; its end or object in holiness, 390; in usefulness, 391; value of the doctrine, 391; perversions of it, 392; human relations to, 393.
Elect infants dying in infancy, 280; Synod of Dort on, 281; how saved, 282; all infants

dying in infancy elect, 282; other elect persons, 283.
English Synod, (Presbyt.) on the Holy Spirit, 415; adoption, 452; good works, 492; perseverance, 498; obedience to divine law, 513; scope of the Gospel, 379, 736.
Errancy of Scripture defined, 85; the phrase misleading, 86; Scriptures, essentially inerrant, 89.

ESCHATOLOGY, Lecture Fourteenth, 722-788.

Eschatology, defined; sources of interest in, 723; sources of the doctrine, 724; Protestant teaching, 725; Confessions on, 726.
Eternal State, 779; form of existence for all, 780; separation in, 780; hell, a state of punishment, 781; heaven, state of reward, 782; everlasting in duration, 783.
Eternity of God, 139.
Ethical quality of the Symbols, 805; their ethical influence.
Eutychianism, on the person of Christ, 314.
Eusebius, three offices of Christ, 325.
Evangelists, how far authorized, 635.
Evidences of inspiration, external, 99, 105; internal, 99, 105; Revision, on the external, 100.
Evil, existence of, 208; elements of the problem, 209; theories of natural and moral necessity, 209; glory of God manifest through, 210.
Evil angels, 206; their doom, 778; *see* Satan, 266.
Evolution of doctrine in the Scriptures, 91; of the plan of salvation, in O. T., 365; in the N. Test., 365; complete in Christ, 366; evolution of law in, 544.
Exaltation, the estate of, 347; its glories.
Excommunication, when called for, 642.
Expiation, *see* Satisfaction.

FAITH, trust, defined; Saving faith 474; definitions, 475; how distinguished, 476; natural to man, 478; saving faith reasonable, 478; its power in character, 479.
Fall of Man, 261; the record historic, 265; the original temptation, 266; incidents of, 268; the consequent curse, 269.
Falling away from grace, 497; supposed biblical examples, 497; Arminian, Wesleyan view, 498: *see* Perseverance.
False swearing, *see* Oath, 576.
Farrar, on eternal hope, 758.
Fatherhood of God, in creation and providence, 170; in redemption, 171; Pearson, Crawford on, 197.
Fifth commandment, reverence to parents, 536; various duties involved, 537; reverence toward all superiors, 537; the promise appended, 538.
Federal theology, *see* Covenants, 255.
Filioque in Nicene Creed, 168.
First Table of the Law, duties toward God, 524: its comprehensiveness, 525; three primal sins forbidden, 526; three obligations enforced, 527; reasons for obedience appended, 528.
Fisher, on Apostles' Creed, 23.
Foreknowledge of God, 146.
Foreordination unto salvation, 384.
Form of Government, orignal, 47, 56; American changes, 572, 836: value of, 793.
Formula of Concord, 29; on supremacy of Scripture, 82; man as created, 247; the origin of souls, 250; fall of man, 268; infants dying in infancy, 280; free will, 298; Christology, 308; two natures in Christ, 314; predestination unto life, 357; acceptance through Christ, 443; good works, 499: obeying the commandments, 512; concupiscence, 547.
Fourth commandment, law of the Sabbath, 531; not an O. T. ordinance merely, 532; Luther, Calvin, on, 532; obligation universal and perpetual, 533.
Free agency, *see* Ability, Free Will.
Free Church, Scotland, on depravity, 277; natural virtue, 280; salvation of infants, 282; of the heathen, 284; universality of the Gospel, 379; reprobation, 400; religious liberty, 578.
Free grace in justification, 339.
Free Will, defined, 290; four moral spheres, 290; Confessions on, 290; Augustine on, 293; effect of sin on freedom, 292.
French Confession, 30; on the Scriptures, 83; God defined in, 125; original sin, 275; free will, 298; Christology, 308; the incarnation, 312; preterition, 396; on the use of the moral law, 516; on civil magistracy, 569; on church membership, 626.
Future punishment and reward, *see* Hell, Heaven.

GARDNER, intellectual quality of Puritanism, 49.
Genesis, two records of creation, 204.
Genuineness of the Scriptures, 102.
Genevan Confession, 351.
Gentiles brought in, 781.
Geology and Scripture, 202.
Gieseler, on Augsburg Conf. 826.
Gillespie, evidences of Scripture, 101; mutual accommodation, 567; Christian liberty and toleration, 808.

GOD IN HIS ACTIVITIES, Lecture Fourth, 178-236.

GOD IN HIS BEING, Lecture Third, 124-177.

God, definitions of, 125; existence, 126; proofs of, 127; from nature, 128; from man, 130; unity of, 131. Can God be known, 163.
God a Spirit, 133; characteristics as Spirit, 134; life of God as Spirit, 136; absolute Spirit, 137; infinite, eternal, unchangeable Spirit, 139; constitutional and moral qualities, 142; *see* Attributes.

God as cause, first and final, 148; as will, supreme and absolute, 149; consequent sovereignty, 149; as essentially active, 178; relation to second causes, *see* Providence.
Good Works, 488; Roman doctrine of, 488; Protestant, 489; commended, 490; evidences of living faith, 491; supernatural agency in producing, 491; acceptable, but not salvatory, 492; works done by unregenerate men, 493.
Goodness of God, 153; his fatherhood, 154.
Gospel, defined, 367; system of saving truth, 368; contents and worth, 368; also a divine offer, 374; its universal adaptation, 374; progressive unfolding, 376; confessional declarations as to scope, 378; Calamy, Marshall on, 378; proposed chapter on, 379
Gospel, compared with other schemes of salvation, 371; human energy inadequate to save, 371; divine love and help requisite, 373; this scheme reasonable and effectual, 374; duty of all men to receive, 380; of the church to proclaim, 380.
Government of God in providence, 216; providential and moral distinguished, 235; moral government described, 295.
Grace prevenient, its extent, 425; spiritual significance, 426; Augustine, Luther on, 427; sovereignty of the Spirit in, 428; *see* Common Grace.
Grace efficacious, 453; eventuates in conversion, 453; in sanctification, 456; in what sense irresistible, 457.
Grace and law, how related, 553; faith and obedience conjoined, inseparable, 553; antinomian error, 554; James and Paul in harmony, 554.
Greek (oriental) **Creeds,** 33; God defined in, 133; Christology, 311; priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, 333; the descensus ad inferos, 347; the authority of tradition, 347; the Holy Spirit, 413; faith, 478; concupiscence, 547; marks of the true church, 605.
Gregory Nazianzen, existence of God proved from nature, 129.
Guizot, on the Reformation, 461.
Guilt, various meanings of the term, 273, 307.
Guyon, Madame, 485; Wesley on, 584.

HADES, meanings of the term, 752; its analogue in Sheol.
Hagenbach, on the formation of dogma, 5; the trias of Revelation, 172; origin of souls, 250; on the Sec. Helv. Conf., 826.
Hall, Harmony of Protestant Confessions, 557, 796.
Hallam, on Erastianism in the Church of Scotland, 571; estimate of the Assembly, 789.
Hamilton, on the argument for God, 124; mental action not limited by space, 140; on an axiom of Augustine, 162; our unpictureable notions, 526.
Harris, on the moral government of God, 295.
Harmony of the Reformed Confessions, volume on, 796.
Headship of Adam, natural, 272; federal, 273; Calvin, Hodge on, 275.
Headship of Christ in his church, 651; Protestant emphasis on, 652; nature and extent, 653; his word the supreme law, 653; controversies respecting this headship, 654: *see* Kingdom.
Hearing, duty of conscionable, 711; qualities of acceptable, 712; results in spiritual fruitage, 712; neglect of, 714.
Heathen, moral condition of, 283; salvability of, 284, 425; attitude of early Protestantism, 283; Zwingli, on salvability, 284; recent declarations, 284; Augustine on, 425.
Heaven, the universe of reward, 782; employments of, 782; elements of blessedness, 783; faith of the universal church in, 784; symbolic descriptions, 785.
Heidelberg Catechism, 30; its quality and value, 827; on providence, 217; providence and sin, 225; prayer, 230; man as created, 247; the fall of man, 268; inborn and actual sins, 285; the two natures in Christ, 314; the three offices, 326; the Gospel, 370; repentance 488; good works, 496; obeying the commandments, 512; concupiscence, 547; infant church membership, 629; definition of the sacraments, 668; of baptism, 675; on immortality, 744.
Hell, the universe of punishment, 780; natural theology teaching its existence, 780; Butler, Jackson on, 780; punishment must follow sin, even eternally, 781; fact and duration revealed in Scripture, 782; creed affirmations, 784.
Helvetic Confession, First, 29; on the Scriptures, 88; man as created, 247; Christology, 303; the ministry, 681; immortality, 744.
Helvetic Confession, Second, 30; its theological value, 798, 826; on the trinity, 169; the creation, 196; angels, good and evil, 206; providence and sin, 225; man as created, 247; the origin of sin, 264; the fall of man, 268; Christology, 303; the Gospel, 370; the Holy Spirit, 411; saving faith, 475; repentance, 488; observance of the Sabbath, 532; the civil magistracy, 569; the church, 603; infant church membership, 628; church councils, 643; eschatology, 726.
Hetherington, estimate of the Assembly, 790; on possible union of Protestantism, 825; Assembly action respecting, 826.
Hickok, on the fall of angels, 267.

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION, Lecture First, 1–65.

Hobbes, church in the state, 612.
Hodge, Ch. on inspiration, 79; alleged errancies in Scripture, 79; sublapsarianism in Symbols, 188; primitive temptation, 257; headship of Adam, 260; original sin, 275; covenant of redemption, 360.

Holiness in God, 157; intrinsic worthiness, 157; moral completeness, 158; Charnock, Schliermacher on, 158; holiness in man through grace, 390.

Holy days, except fasts and thanksgivings' forbidden; also, canonical hours, 721; Christmas recognized, 721; Christian year, 721.

HOLY SCRIPTURE, Lecture Second, 66-123.

Holy Spirit, a divine person; proof of, 410; ancient and confessional statements, 411; recent developments of the doctrine, 413; proposed chapter in Revision on, 414; its values, 415; his claim to worship, 415; equality with Father and Son, 417; erroneous views of, Socinian, 418; objections answered; the doctrine cardinal, 419; proves Christianity divine, 420.

Holy Spirit in his activities, 282, 415; author of Scripture, 78, 418; makes no new revelations, 110; supreme interpreter of, 119; active in the spiritual sphere, 416; before the advent, and after, 417; in the church and the world, 418.

Holy Spirit and the Christian life, 469; its author, 469; its conditions, trust in, 470; obedience to, 471; communion with, 473; helping to obey law, 517; rendering church agencies effectual, 633.

Hooker, on incarnation, 315; majesty of law, 506; power of the keys, 638.

Hooper, on salvation of infants, 281; liberty of conscience, 560.

Howe, on Bible as a rule of life, 108; man as fallen, 277; method of divine government, 394.

Hume, argument against miracles, 220.

Humiliation of Christ, estate of, 344; its elements, 345; its close with death, 346.

Huxley, theory of creation, 199.

IDOLATRY, forbidden, 132; first commandment on, 526.

Image of God in man; natural, in personality, 242; moral, in character, 243; power to obey law, 243; Calvin on, 243.

Images, worship of, 135; Greek and Roman error, 135; Protestant teaching, 134; forbidden, 527.

Imbecile and insane salvable, 283.

Immanence of God in the universe, 140, 214.

Immersion not necessary, 678.

Immortality, defined, 740; speculative evidences, 741; biblical proofs, O. T., 742; N. Test., 743; creeds, ancient, 743; Protestant, 744.

Immortality on earth, 251; tree of life, 251; death in the world before sin, 252.

Immutability of God, 140; anthropomorphic descriptions.

Imputation, general definition; cognate terms,—reckon, account, 440; of Adamic sin, immediate, 278; mediate, 274; of righteousness of Christ, justification, 439.

Inability, *see* Ability, natural, moral, Sin.

Incarnation, an inexplicable fact, 308; necessity for, nature of, 309; biblical proofs of, 310; supernatural concomitants, 310; spiritual significance of, 311; historic verification, creed statements, 311; two natures revealed in, 314.

Inerrancy of Scripture, 83; term, error, defined, 83; hypothesis of errancy considered, 85; mistakes in transcription, 86; obscurations of time, 87; sound exegesis requisite, 88.

Infallibility, papal claim, 14, 109.

Infants corrupted by original sin, 282; dying in infancy, 282; elect infants saved, all dying infants, 282; gracious work wrought in them.

Infinitude in God, 139.

Inner light insufficient, 120.

Innes, on creed subscription, 573, 838.

Inspiration, general description, 77; distinguished from revelation and illumination, 77; Symbols affirm only the fact, 78; theories of; certain errors excluded, 79; divine and human agencies in, 80; involves language, 80; varieties of, 89; Revision on, 89.

Intercession of Christ, nature and scope, 346.

Intermediate Life, 748: no sleep of the soul, 749; life conscious, active, 750; moral, retributive, 751; separation of righteous and wicked in, 752; no limbus patrum, or infantum, 752; three false theories respecting, 753.

Intermediate life; purgatorial dogma groundless, 753; Protestant testimonies against, 753; naturalistic theory unwarranted, 754; its mischievous influence, 756.

Intermediate life; theory of salvation after death, 757; various forms, 757; evidences adduced, 758; Scripture conclusive against, 758; also, symbolism and theology, 759; and Christian consciousness, 760.

Interpretation of Scripture by Scripture, 110; right and duty of private, 112; church interpretation, 114; Roman claim, 115; rules of interpretation, 118; Spirit interpreting Scripture, 119.

Intuitive knowledge of God, 143; its insufficiency.

Irish Articles, 30; close relations to the Symbols, 40; on the trinity, 169; creation, 198; providence, 217; providence and sin, 225; the Gospel, 370; reprobation, 397; saving faith, 475; the civil magistrate, 569; civil rule of popes, 575; the papacy, 650; particular judgment, 768.

JESUITS, their moral delinquency, 580.

Jews, conversion of, 730; restoration to Holy Land, 731; relation to spread of the Gospel, 731.

Judaic opinions, millennarian, condemned, 726.

Judge, Christ as final, 348, 777.
Judgment, Particular, of souls at death, 761; the separation judicial, 762; impressiveness of, 768.
Judgment, General, of the race, at the end of the world, 774; evidences of, reasons for, 775; biblical teaching decisive, 776; Christ as judge; circumstances of, 777; persons judged, men and angels, 777; basis and grade of judgment, 778; formal issue; two universes of souls, 778; confessional teaching, 779.
Jus divinum theory of the church, 47, 636, 647.
Justice of God, 151; internal and external, 152; varieties in manifestation, 153.
Justification defined 437; ground in Christ only, 438; his grace imputed, 439; Roman error, 439; main elements of, pardon and acceptance, 440; biblical proofs, 446; doctrine final in Christianity, 446; historic evolution of, 447; Owen, Buchanan, Ritschl on, 447.
Justin Martyr, preaching in the early church, 708.

KANT, on prayer, 228.
Kenosis, biblical term, 312; the kenotic process, 312; no depotentiation involved, 313; Christ truly divine therein, 313; Dorner on, 313.
Kent, on marriage, 586.
Keys, *see* Power of the.
King, Christ as, Protestant doctrine, 339; biblical testimonies to, 341; earthly and heavenly aspects of his kingship, 342.
Kingdom over nature, 343; over humanity, 343; over the believer, 342; over the church visible, 342, 651; his authority supreme and final, 654; the kingdom surrendered, 786.
Knox, pastor in Geneva, 351; on value of schools, 662; observance of sacraments, 689.
Krauth, salvation of infants, 280; Augsburg Conf. 826.

LACTANTIUS, on the divine nature, 141.
Lambeth Articles on reprobation, 400.

LAW OF GOD, Lecture Tenth, 506–555.

Law written on the heart, 68; law and light of nature, 68, 514; place of law in Christianity, 506; the Sinaitic law, 519; evolution of, in the O. T., 544; in the N. Test., 545; area of duty widened, 546; greater authority, 547; added sanctions, 548; Christ, the supreme revealer of law, 548; law and morality, 550; law and grace, 553; *see* Moral Law.
Laws of Nature, 221.
Leibnitz, on miracle, 219.
Leighton, on communion of saints, 617.
Lessing, on the unity in God, 162; the nature of faith, 478.
Liberty of Conscience, 560; conscience responsible to God only, 561; submission to man forbidden, 562; Symbols on, 564; state church theory, 564; *see* Toleration.
Liddon, prayer the characteristic act of religion, 231.

LIFE, THE CHRISTIAN, Lecture Ninth, 461–505.

Life, the Christian, prominence in Protestantism, 462; deficiencies in Roman doctrine, 463; general conception of, 465; supernatural in origin, 466; its ideal, Christ; its motive, love, 467; its authority and fruitage, 468.
Life, the Christian; relations of the Spirit to, 469; dependence and trust, 470; obedience and communion, 471; manifestations of this life, *see* Faith, Repentance, Good Works, Perseverance.
Life of God, its nature, 136.
Light of nature, defined, 68; its insufficiency, 71, 578.
Lightfoot, on mode of baptism, 677; on set forms of prayer, 719.
Liturgy, Assembly protest against, 718; its manual of worship, 719; liberty in use of, 720; its value, 798; general question respecting liturgies, 720; Luther, Calvin, prepared, 720; free worship preferable, 721.
Locke, definition of error, 88; definition of person, 164.
Lord's Day, *see* Sabbath.
Lord's Supper, Roman and Protestant doctrine contrasted, 686; error of transubstantiation, 687; of opus operatum; other errors, 687; Protestant interpretation of the sacrament, 687; Zwinglian view, 687; Lutheran consubstantiation, 688; general Reformed view, 688; analysis, 689; papal mass condemned, 689; spiritual benefits derived, 690; duty of, qualifications for, observance, 690; minor details, 691.
Lotze, on the origin of the soul, 251.
Love, its central place in religion, 467.
Loyalty to avowed creeds, 17; proper limitations, 17; loyalty to the Symbols, obligations involved, 882.
Luthardt, on prayer, 228.
Luther, foremost place in the Reformation, 29, 406; English estimate of, 822; on the apocrypha, 97; the divine omnipresence, 139; providence, 216; efficacy of prayer, 230; prevenient grace, 427; ministries of the Spirit, 474; on absolution, 497; obeying the commandments, 513; commandments to be valued, 523; regarding the Sabbath, 581; the tenth commandment, 543; religious vows, 582; priestly celibacy, 592; baptism, 675; need of schools, 682; thanksgiving, 714.
Lutheran Confessions, 29.
Lutheranism, general character and tendency. 667, 826; affinities with Episcopacy, 39, 821.

MACAULAY, on theology a finished product, 13; the personality of Christ, 331; fidelity of Puritans to duty, 509; religious liberty, 567.

Macpherson, on sublapsarianism in the Assembly, 188; on community of goods, 619; agreement of the Protestant creeds, 822.

Maine, on Jesuit casuistry, 581.

MAN, Lecture Fifth, 237-301.

Man, biblical record of creation, 238; a single act, by divine fiat, 239; theory of evolution excluded, 239; unity of the race, 239; question of antiquity, 240; original endowments, physical, intellectual, moral, 241; image of God, 243.

Man under law, 294; this law defined, 297; responsible for his acts, 299; his failure, 299; still a salvable being, 421; corrupt, yet conscious and accountable, 422; needing gracious aid, 422.

Manton, estimate of the Assembly, 43.

Marriage, defined, 585; ordained of God, 586; not a sacrament,—Roman view, 587; duties involved, 587; legal regulation requisite, 588; limitations, as to blood relationship, 588; recent declarations respecting 588; marrying in the Lord enjoined, 589.

Martensen, the three offices of Christ, 325; inextinguishable capability of good, 755.

Mary, worship of, forbidden, 704; her immaculacy, 836.

Materialism, 130; Carlyle on, 131.

McCosh, on the efficacy of prayer, 231; providential discipline of man, 271.

Means of Grace, means of salvation, 695; the word, the sacraments and prayer, 696; religious feasts, also, 696; fasting as a means of grace, 697; enlarged conception under the Gospel, 697; variations in Protestant usage, 698.

Mediation, defined; illustrations, 319; its necessity and ground, 320; both internal and external, 321; full conception of, 322; Cudworth on, 322.

Mediator, Christ as, generic view, 322; confessional use of the term, 322; his qualifications, personal, official, 323; doctrine vital in Christianity, 324; Christ the only mediator, 324; his three offices, 325.

Melancthon, invited to England, 39; on the argument for God, 128; synergistic teaching, 279; free will in man, 291; close of Messiahship, 787.

Melchizedek, type of Christ, 334.

Membership in the particular church, 624; proper tests and conditions; conversion requisite, 625; credible evidence needful, 627; low views pernicious, 628.

Messianic promises; the first, 271; the four primary, 365; in the Psalms and prophetical books, 365; Messiahship fully, clearly disclosed, 366.

Methodist Articles of Religion, 36; on the need of grace, 423.

Mill, on creation, 199; miracle, 219; use of reward and penalty in moral government, 549.

Millennarianism, 729; creeds against, Judaic opinions, 726; church testimony, 737; no premillennial advent revealed, 765.

Millennium, general view, 727; theories as to the future of humanity, 728; endless movement without progress, 728; advance through natural agencies, 728; ultimate decline and ruin, 728; biblical doctrine, in contrast, 729; humanity complete through the Gospel, 729.

Millennium, time when, not revealed, 730; three events antecedent, 730; conversion of the Jews, 730; overthrow of Antichrist, 731; universal spread of the Gospel, 732; three events to follow, 731; the resurrection, 731; the general judgment, 731; final coming of Christ, 732; duration of the millennial era, 732; Edwards on, 733; Symbols on, 734; current Presbyterian opinion, 736.

Miller, argument for church creeds, 20.

Milton, on selfhood as the sin of Satan, 257; the intolerance of the Assembly, 568; papal claim to civil authority, 574; on schism, 622; church discipline, 640; estimates of the Assembly, 790.

Ministry, an ordinance of God, 698; papal corruption, Protestant restoration, 698; Westminster position, 699; the three orders set aside, 699; how related to other ordinances, 700; relation to the sacraments, 700; qualifications for the office, 701; special demand of Presbyterianism, 701; parity of, 702; Assembly as a Board of Triers, 702.

MINUTES OF THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY: Introduction by Mitchell, 42, 44.

Miracle, defined, 77; occurring in providence, 218; necessity of, 218; attestational value, 100, 219; Butler, Mill, Hume on, 220; miracle at Sinai, Augustine on, 521.

Missions, Roman under Loyola, 654; early English, Continental, 654; Synod of Dort on missions, 655; church a missionary agency, 664.

Mitchell, on the Assembly, 43, 791; on the Catechisms, 64; Westminster view of inspiration, 78; canonicity, 102; sublapsarianism in the Assembly, 188; doctrine of the covenants, 361; liberty of conscience, 568, 817.

Moderatism in Scotland, in England, 838.

Moehler, on the Apocrypha, 96; Roman doctrine of justification, 444; confession and absolution, 486; communion of saints, 617; the intercession of the saints, 617; purgatory, 753.

Monarchianism on the person of Christ, 317.

Monasticism, 594; Roman rule, 591; condemned by Protestantism, 592; Jeremy

Taylor, Zwingli, Luther, Calvin on, 592.
Moral inability, in the disposition, 278; *see* Ability, Sin.
Moral Government, defined, 234; distinction between providential and moral, 235, 295; God as moral Governor, 295; principles involved, 296; Butler, Taylor, Harris on, 295.
Moral Law, existence of, 252; source in God, 297; characteristics, 298; supremacy of, 298; penalties of disobedience, 300; varieties of; law of nature, written on the heart, in Scripture, 514; uses of the revealed law, 516; how interpreted, 518; Calvin, Dickson on, 514.
Moral nature in man as created, 241; capacity for righteousness, 243; innate or concreated holiness, 243; image of God in man, 243.
Moral responsibility of man, 297; his obligation to law inevitable, 298; duty his supreme rule, 297; personal disobedience, ground of condemnation, 300.
Morality and law, how related, 550; law requires morality, 550; natural and biblical compared, 551; highest type of morality in Christianity, 552.
Mosaism, its twofold mission, 338; purpose and uses in redemption, 365.
Muller, on pre-existence, 248.
Mysticism, interpretations of Scripture, 117.
Mystery in revelation and inspiration, 76; the being of God, 134; the trinity in God, 175; providence, 221; person of Christ, 314; his mediation, 350; regeneration, 428; resurrection, 769.

NAME of God, significance of, 529; how dishonored, 530.
Natural liberty, defined, 292.
Nature and Revelation, how related, 70; testimony of nature to God, 128.
Natural Theology, sphere and contents, 70.
Natural Religion, possible, 71; contents and nature, 71; its insufficiency, 71, 112.
Neal, revision of the Thirty-Nine Articles, 46.
Neander, on the Trinity in the early church, 172.
Necessity the ruling law in nature, 811.
Need of creeds, exterior, 7; interior, 8.
Nescience, *see* Agnosticism.
Nestorianism, on the person of Christ, 315.
Nicene Creed, 24; Filioque in, 168; on the Father in creation, 197; extent of creation, 298; communion of saints, 616; resurrection, 778.

OATHS, 576; oath and vow how distinguished, 577; making oath a religious act; imprecatory element involved, 577; various classes of, 577; right to require, obligation to make, 578; limitations, cannot oblige to sin, 579; mental reservation forbidden, 580; not to be violated, 580; Pascal, on Jesuit casuistry; Maine on, 581.
Obedience, required of Adam and Eve, its qualities, 253; required of all, personally, perpetually, 297, 471; responsibility for disobedience, 297; miseries involved, in this life, 299; obedience to the Spirit, 472.
Obligation, moral, *see* Duty, Law.
Oehler, on progress of doctrine in O. Test., 367; on the fifth commandment, 537.
Old Catholic creed, 36; the minor sacraments, 670.
Omnipotence of God, 148; working through secondary causes, 149, working without or above means, 150; possibility of miracle implied, 218.
Omnipresence of God, three-fold sense, 139.
Omniscience of God, 145; qualities of his knowledge, 146; comprehends all things actual or possible, 147; complete wisdom implied, 147.
Oracles of God, the Scriptures, 632.
Ordinances, Christian, 692; how related to sacraments, 693; their number and value, 694; the Sabbath, the sanctuary, 694; means of grace, 695.
Ordination to the ministry prescribed, 700; Assembly, an ordaining Board, 702.
Origin of souls, 247; Cicero, Augustine on, 249; scholastic opinion, Anselm, Aquinas, 250; Calvin, Lotze on, 251.
Original righteousness, 243; Pelagian, Roman view unsound, 243; true holiness involved, confessional statements, 244.
Original Sin, transmission of sin, 272; Calvin, definition of the phrase, 272; natural headship, 272; federal, 273; immediate imputation, 274; mediate imputation, 275; confessional teaching. Hodge on, 275.
Owen, on justification, 449; adoption, 450; sixteen standard doctrines, 817.

PALEY, definition of an oath, 577; on marriage, 586.
Pantheism, defined, 135; its deficiencies.
Papacy arraigned by Calvin, 656; an antibiblical system, 658; injurious and corrupting, 659; Pope not a vicar of Christ, 658; has no civil authority, 673.
Paradise, the original, 244; vocation of man in, 245; paradise forfeited, 272; regained through grace, 402.
Pardon, under the Gospel, 440; how related to forgiveness, 440; divine disposition in, 441; its extent and permanence, 441; not based on human merit; its ground in Christ and his work, 441; not the whole of justification, 442.
Parents, duties of, 538; *see* Membership, Baptism.
Particular Church, its constituents, 624; membership, true and defective views, 625; general Protestant usage, 626; Calvin, Edwards on, 626.
Particular church, its endowments, 630; ministry as an, 630; oracles and ordinances,

631 ministry and the Word, 632; endowments made effectual through the Spirit, 633; ends secured through endowments, 633.
Particular church, its organization and government, 634; officers extraordinary, now ceased, 635; ordinary and perpetual, 636; need of such officers; Presbyterian provision, 636; ends to be sought in organization, 637.
Particular Judgment, at death; distinguished from final judgment, 761; involves separation of good and evil, 761; this separation judicial, based on character; Christ the judge, 762; permanent in its results, 763; testimony of the creeds.
Particular Symbolism defined, 1, 37.
Pascal, on Jesuitic casuistry, 580.
Pearson on doctrine of the Spirit, 412; communion of saints, 617.
Pelagianism on the primitive character of man, 243; on the corruption induced by sin, 276; on divine grace, 433.
Penance, Roman doctrine of, 485; no substitute for repentance, 486.
Perfection in God, 157; the divine character complete, 159.
Perfection in man, whether possible on earth, 501; different conceptions of, 502; Roman view; Wesley on, 502; sanctification completed only at death, 502.
Permission of sin, 261; the permissive decree, 262; sin not independent of God, 263; confessional statements, 264; theories respecting, 264.
Perseverance, permanence of the Christian life, 494; Roman perversion, Arminian error, 495; not dependent on the renewed will, 496; but on divine election, mediation of Christ, work of the Spirit, 497; saints falling away, 498.
Person, the term defined, 164; its theologic limitations, 164; Locke on, Calvin on, 164; differentiating properties in the divine persons, 166; confessional definitions, 169.
Personality in Christ single; two natures in, 313; neither divine nor human nature to be excluded, 316.
Place of man in nature, 244; his dominion over, his moral stewardship, 245.

PLAN OF SALVATION, Lecture Seventh, 352–404.

Plan of Salvation, decree from eternity, 356, 401; sovereign, free, unchangeable, 357, 403; perfect and complete; creed statements, 358, 402; historically unfolded, 382; effectual in application, 403.
Plato, on redemption, 402; laws the souls of states, 514.
Plumptre, on biblical term, destruction, 746.
Polity, how far defined in Scripture, 647; diversities at the Reformation, 648; three types of polity developed, 649; resulting conflicts; how far agreed, 650.
Polygamy, patriarchal usage noted, 589; Council of Trent on; Protestant condemnation of, 589.
Polytheism in all varieties forbidden, 182, 525.
Pope, civil rule of, 573; Protestant opposition, Milton on, 574; creed statements, 575; Syllabus Errorum on, 576; claim wholly invalid, 576; *see* Papacy.
Positivism, valuable, yet inadequate, 72; Christianity the universal religion, 404.
Power of God, in creation, 199; in grace, 373, omnipotent.
Power of the Keys, right of discipline, 638. hierarchal usurpation of, 638; vested in the church; Protestant view, 639; elements of, 640; *see* Discipline.
Praise to God, its nature; Edwards on, 713; elements of public praise, 713; Directory on, 714.
Prayer, its constituents, 228; Kant, Luthardt, Tyndall on, 228; answered in providence; theories, 229; Lord's Prayer, exposition of, 231; confessional definitions, 231.
Prayer in worship, elements of, 713; Protestant belief in prayer, 716; constituents and range of, 717; prayer for the dead forbidden, 717; in foreign tongues; carelessness in prayer rebuked, 718.
Preaching, part of public worship, 707; from the earliest ages, Justin Martyr on, 708; restored at the Reformation, 708; qualifications requisite; method and spirit in, 709; Directory, rules to be regarded, 710.
Predestination, defined, involved in the idea of God as Spirit, 137; unto life, 357.
Pre-existence of man, theory of; Müller on, 248.
Presbyterian Alliance, on communion of saints, 619; Letter of Dorner to, 883.
Presbyterian polity, 646; constitutional elements and features, 647; general warrant in Scripture, 648; reasons in its favor, 648; its development at the Reformation, 649; agreements with other polities, 650; its proved value, 793; its diffusion, 881.
Presbyt. Review, case of Best, 586; John Durie and his work, 824.
Preservation, *see* Providence.
Preservation of Scripture providential, 101.
Preterition, 194, 395; confessional statements, 396, 813; Calvin on, 396; later Calvinism, 812.
Priest and Sacrifice, Christ as, 332; universal Protestant recognition; Roman and Greek belief in, 333; qualities of Christ as priest, 333; qualities as our sacrifice, 334; Christ both priest and sacrifice, 335.
Primeval man, erroneous theories, 246; his glorious place in nature, 246; Argyle on, 247.
Private interpretation, right and duty, 112.
Probation, man under law; its nature, 252;

involving the race in effect, 259; all men under probation, 297.
Probation, after death, 757; in what form, for what classes, 757; arguments urged in support, 758; witness of Scripture against, 758; theology and symbolism against, 759.

PROCESS OF SALVATION, Lecture Eighth, 405–460.

Process of Salvation, complex, personal, 407; various conceptions, 410; variety in aspect, 436.
Procession of the Spirit, 168, 416; from the Father, from the Son, 417; not secondary to either, 360, 417.
Profanity in all forms forbidden, 529; civil legislation; offense against society, 531.
Profession of faith required, 625; qualities of, 626; false profession, 627.
Progress of doctrine in the Bible, 366; Oehler on, in O. T., Bernard on, in N. T., 367.
Progress in the Symbols, 405.
Property, crimes against, in all varieties forbidden, 540.
Properties, differentiating in the trinity, 167; begotten and proceeding, 167, 169; Christ, only begotten, 306.
Prophecy, defined; evidential uses of, 100; ceased under the Gospel, 685.
Prophet, Christ as; biblical conception, 328; as the Logos, prophet by nature, 329; supreme teacher, supreme foreteller, 330; value of his teachings, his prophecies, 331; his example as prophet, 331.
Protestant Confessions, comparative view, 31, 798, 826; confessional value, 32.
Providence, defined; preservation included in, 214; also government, 216; method of God in, 217; providence and miracle, 218; relation to second causes, 221; vastness, minuteness, complexity of, 222; how related to freedom, to human sin, 222.
Providence over saints, 226; over the church, 227; over the Scriptures, 227; providence and prayer, 228; over the wicked, 231; divine tenderness and patience in, 232; chastising the incorrigible, 232; sometimes retributive, 233; dealing with fallen angels, 233.
Punishments of sin in this life; inward, external, 300; future punishment certain, 780; Butler, Jackson on, 780; *see* Hell.
Purgatory, Council of Trent on, 752; practical mischiefs of the dogma, 753; Protestant creeds against; no biblical foundation for, 754.
Purity of the church, 655; church exposed to error, to corruption, 655; churches may degenerate, 656; church of Rome styled a synagogue of Satan, 656; better estimate possible: Calvin on, 659.

RACE Human: origin of, 238; unity, 239; antiquity, 240.
Rainy, on revision of the Symbols, 837.
Rationalism, 72; *see* Reason.
Reason, an insufficient guide, 71; Butler on, 72; reason and Scripture, 117; reason not an ultimate authority, 118.
Reconciliation between God and man, why needful, 319, 354; how secured, 373; complete in Christ, 324, 374.
Redeemer, redemption, *see* Mediator, Salvation, 353; covenant of redemption defined, 358.
Reformation, The, its formal principle, 64; its complex character; Guizot on, 461; its contribution to the Christian life, 462.
Reformation in Britain, its general character, 38; earlier British creeds, 38; developments prior to the Assembly, 40.
Reformed Churches, their pronounced Calvinism; their substantial unity, 822.
Reformed Confessions, 29.
Reformed Episcopacy, Articles of, 36.
Regeneration, defined, Holy Spirit its author, 430; biblical descriptions; Synod of Dort on, 431; relations to conversion, 432; to sanctification, 438.
Regula Fidei, Rule of Faith, 7.
Religious usages not enjoined in the New Test.; agape, anointing, kiss of peace, washing of feet, 692.
Remonstrance, Arminian, 30; on the divine potency, 150; on the status of infants, 281; the eternal purpose to save, 389; perseverance, 495; assurance, 505; just condemnation on account of sin, 813.
Repentance. 481; how related to faith, 481; distinguished from regret, from remorse, 482; from false conviction, penitence, 483; Calvin on; creed statements, 483; two elements in; contrition, renunciation, 484; Roman definition, its serious defects, 484; doctrine of repentance to be faithfully preached, 484.
Reprobation, defined, 194, 395; preterition, a cognate, meliorating term, 396; creed statements, 397; severities of the doctrine mitigated, 399, 813; later Calvinistic statements, 400, 813; recent Revision on, 401, 814.
Responsibility, nature and extent, 298, 514.
Restorationism, *see* Probation after death.
Resurrection, universal fact yet to occur, 769; at the final advent, other views unwarranted, 769; mysterious, yet not incredible, 770; presumptions for and against, 770; belief fully warranted by Scripture; importance of the doctrine, 771.
Resurrection of Christ, evidences in proof, 771; sustains belief in universal resurrection, 772; the raised body, nature of identity, 772; testimony of the Christian creeds, 773; relation of resurrection to the final judgment, 773.
Revelation, defined, 72; objections, 73; God determines the question of need; also of contents and modes, 74; sin and grace

necessitate, 74; process of, 75; universal in scope and aim, 75; progressive, complete, final, 91; false revelations to be rejected, 111.
Revelations of Christ before the incarnation, 307.
Reverence to parents enjoined, 538.
Revision of creeds, right and duty; conditions of, 14; revision of the Symbols; historic illustrations, 836; extent, conditions, spirit of, 837.
Revision, The Proposed, on inspiration of the Scriptures, 89; external evidences of, 100; creation, 204; modifying definition of depravity, 278; unrenewed persons, their works, 280, 498; salvability of infants dying in infancy, 282; of other elect persons, of the heathen 284; natural liberty, freedom of the will, 293; chapter on the Gospel, 379; analysis, 380; reprobation and preterition, 401; chapter on the Holy Spirit, analysis, 413; extensiveness of common grace, 426; marriage with unbelievers, 589; the pope not the vicar of Christ, 658. Omissions proposed; the term, testament, 364; the eternal decree, in part, 401; antichrist as applied to the pope, 658; the sin unto death, prayer respecting, 718; meliorating influence of the Revision, 810, 889.
Reward, and penalty in moral government, 547; Mill on, 549; Christ on, 549.
Reynolds, on ingenerating religious knowledge, 668.
Righteousness in God, 151; not impugned by sin, 153, 399; righteousness of Christ, 439; how imputed, 442.
Ritual, *see* Liturgy.
Rome, church of, how to be viewed, 659; Calvin on, 658.
Roman Creeds, 34; *see* Trent, Council of, Vatican Decrees, Syllabus Errorum.
Rous, version of the Psalms, 715.

SABBATH, threefold enactment; at creation, at Sinai, at the resurrection of Christ, 533; change of day justified, 534; foundation in nature, 534; works of necessity and mercy permitted, 534; civil legislation respecting, 535; particular questions, 535.
Sabellian doctrine of Christ, 317.

SACRAMENTS, ORDINANCES, WORSHIP; Lecture Thirteenth, 667–721.

Sacraments, definitions of, 668; divinely instituted, primary and secondary design, 669; Roman, Greek, Protestant doctrine respecting, 670; Protestantism accepts two only, reasons, 670; real meaning and value of, 671; the five minor sacraments unwarranted, 671; Tridentine dogma, Moehler, in defense of, 672; origin of the sacraments in Hebraism, 672; churchly ordinances, 673; efficacy not dependent on officials, 673; duty of faithful observance, 435, 674; yet not necessary to salvation, 674.
Sacred times, canonical hours, 721.
Sacrifice, its primal design, 333, 365; Christ as sacrifice; his perfection, 384.
Salvation, described, 353; need of, 354; its comprehensive nature, 355; Roman, Protestant doctrine, 356; Socinian, humanitarian error, Channing on, 355.
Salvation a process; objective and subjective elements, 407; biblical language used to describe, 408; the Spirit supreme in, 410; his special activities, 416; human soul engaged throughout, 421; how far obtained in and through the church, 609.
Salvation after death, *see* Intermediate Life.
Sanctification, defined, 452; the whole man involved; a divine, human work, 453; the image of God reproduced in, 454; progressive dying unto sin, living unto righteousness, 454; the two processes simultaneous; human responsibility for, 455; may be arrested or impaired, 456; completed only at death, 456; Protestantism substantially agreed, 457.
Sanctuary, Christian; its value to religion, 694.
Satan, a real being, the original tempter, 205; symbolic testimonies respecting, 206; earlier and later theology on, 206; confederacy of fallen angels, 207; Satan, his nature and fall, 266; his agency in the first temptation, 267; confessional affirmations, 268; arraigned at the judgment, 777; condemned with reprobate men, 778; *see* Angels.
Satisfaction of Christ, 335; equivalent terms; atonement, expiation, substitution, merit, 336; elements of this satisfaction, 337; Anselm, Edwards, Butler, on, 337; profound mystery involved; the essential fact clear, 337; extent of application; its completeness, 338.
Saving Faith, confessional definitions, 474; other varieties of faith, 476; saving faith reasonable, 478; an active grace, 479; powerful in effect, 480; essential to Christian manhood, 480; Edwards, Bushnell on, 477; *see* Faith.
Saving Knowledge, how gained, 119; obligation to seek it, 121.
Savonarola, on the true church, 625.
Savoy, Council of, 55; doctrinal and ecclesiastical basis, 56; testimony to the times, 58.
Savoy Declaration, on Christian liberty, 559; on the ministry, 699; standard of orthodoxy, 817.
Saxon Articles on baptism, 675.
Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, 31; on Augsburg Confession, 39; on Shorter Catechism, 64; on Westminster doctrine of the will, 291; church and state, 573; communion of saints, 617; Synod of Dort, 791; Second Helvetic Conf., 799.

Schism, forbidden, 622; wherein it consists, 623.
Schleiermacher, on the holiness of God, 158.
Scholasticism, as related to creeds, 27; its function and weakness, 28.
Schools, Luther on, 682; Knox on, 682; Protestantism on, 683.
Scotch Confession, 30, 39; on the authority of Scripture, 67; its sufficiency, 119; unity of God, 124; providence, 217; man as created, 247; the fall, 268; salvation of infants, 281; Christology, 304; two natures in Christ, 317; his three offices, 326; the kingship of Christ, 340; the Gospel, 370; deadness of the sinner, 432; acceptance through Christ only, 443; good works, 499; obeying the commandments, 512; the civil magistrate, 569; civil rule of popes, 575; church councils, 643; eschatology, 726; psychopannychism, 750; resurrection, 779; universal judgment, 779.

SCRIPTURE, THE HOLY, Lecture Second, 66–123.

Scripture, supremacy of, 66; place in the Symbols, 68; inerrancy of, 83; transmission, 86; obscuration of time, 87; errors in interpreting, 88; alleged errors considered, 89.
Scripture, contents of, 92; Canon, particular books, 98; completeness of, 99; preservation, 101; duty of translating and diffusing, 102.
Scripture, creed elements in, 21; Bible the supreme law within the church, 658; the end of all controversies, 654.
Second Advent, *see* Christ, final Advent.
Second Causes, as necessary, 190; as free, 191; as contingent, 192.
Second Table of the Law, duties toward man, 539; four primal sins forbidden, 539; four obligations enjoined, 540; comprehensiveness of these commands, 541; biblical references appended, 541; civil legislation correspondent, 542.
Sects, how far justified, 620; geographic distribution of churches, 621; other principles of distribution, 621; sectarianism and schism forbidden 622; uses of denominations, 623; spiritual communion fundamental, 628.
Selfhood, the root of all sin, 287.
Sermon on the Mount, an exposition of moral law, 546.
Servetus, his humanitarian view of Christ, 315; his fate, 565.
Shedd, theories as to the origin of souls, 250; the headship of Adam, 261; on the phrase, other elect persons, 283; covenant of redemption, 360; procession of the Holy Spirit, 417; particular judgment, 762; on the doctrine of future punishment, 781.
Sheol, *see* Hades, 752.
Sin, origin of, 210, 262; divine permission; overruled for good, 210, 261; its existence no reflection on God; Confessions on, 224; problem of, 263; not a natural necessity, 265; *see* Original Sin.
Sin personal, four aspects, 285; transgression, 285; want of conformity; rebellion against God, 286; selfhood, 287; in all forms voluntary, invariable guilt of, 288; defective and false conceptions, 289.
Sinner, spiritual deadness of, 421; nature and extent of, 422; diverse views respecting, 422, 432; liabilities to error, 424.
Singing, as an ordinance in worship, 714; Rous, version of Psalms, 715.
Sinlessness of Christ, 331.
Six days of creation, 202; Augustine on; recent ecclesiastical declarations, 202.
Slander in all forms condemned, 540.
Sleep of the soul, *see* Psychopannychism.
Smalcald Articles, 29; on supremacy of Scripture, 66.
Smeaton, on doctrine of the Spirit, 412.
Smith, H. B., definition of decree, 181; on the covenant of works, 260; responsibility for sin, 299; the incarnation, 309; the particular judgment, 762.
Smith, J. Pye, on spiritual influence of trinitarianism, 176; execution of the divine decrees, 190.
Socinianism, 317; *see* Christology.
Socrates, on need of divine help, 378, 421; immortality, 741; future judgment, 781.
Solemn League and Covenant, adopted by Parliament and Assembly, 46; proposed as basis of Protestant union, 825; at the Restoration burned by public hangman, 48; its denunciation of papacy and church of Rome, 595.
Son of God, 305; only begotten, 306; Arian and humanitarian error, 306; sonship an eternal fact, 307.
Soul, not pre-existent, 248; in man as created, 241; origin of souls, 247.
Sovereignty of God, 137; basis in his nature, 138; and in his relations to his creatures, 149; shown in providence, 216; in grace, 357.
Spencer, Herbert, proof of God, 129.
Spirit, God a spirit, 133; his attributes as spirit, 139; spirituality a fundamental fact, 142.
Spirit, Holy, *see* Holy Spirit.
Spiritualism, condemned, 111; all alleged revelations to be rejected, 111.
Sprecher, on Lutheran view of the Supper, 688.
Stanley, on Westminster Article on Scripture, 122; Ten Commandments, 523; on Baxter, 790; on the Symbols, their texture, logical quality; their firm hold, 827.
State and Church, *see* Civil Magistrate; Christianity in the state, 598.
Stillingfleet, on the trinity, 167.
Sublapsarianism, in the Assembly, 187; Macpherson, Mitchell, Hodge on, 188.

Subordinationism in the Trinity, 168, 360.
Subscription to creeds, rule of, 58; conflicts respecting, 59; subscription to the Symbols, its nature, 832; true loyalty involved, 835.
Suffering, as related to sin, 252, 787.
Sum of Saving Knowledge, on sin as selfhood, 287; Christology, 305; the three offices, 325 · Christ as prophet, 329; acceptance, 443; faith and obedience, 555; on the use of Christian doctrine, 465.
Supererogation, works of, 583.
Supralapsarianism in the Assembly, 187.
Suspension from church privileges, 642.
Syllabus Errorum, on the church and the the state 576, 602; marriage a sacrament, 587.
Symbolism, defined, generic and particular, 1; symbolic theology, sphere and relations, 1; values of symbolic study, 2, 36; spirit to be cherished, 37.
Synagogue of Satan, Roman church so described, 659.
Synergistic Controversy, 291.
Synods and Councils, desirable, 642; sphere of synodical action, 644; liability to error, 645; variety in composition and aim, 645; authority of, 646; Tertullian, on early Councils, 644.

Tables, The Two, of the Law; earlier and later divisions; Roman, Reformed, 523.
Taylor, Isaac, on growth of celibacy in the early church, 590; the intermediate life, 750; experience after death, 762.
Taylor, Jeremy, on the evils of celibacy, 591.
Taylor, N. W., on Moral Government, 295.
Teleological argument for God, 128.
Temptation, the original, 265; Satan the tempter, 266; his nature and fall; temptation universal, 268; temptation of our Lord, 268.
Ten Commandments, 519; relation to moral law in general, 519; when and how enacted, 520; supernatural origin and quality, 520; miracle at their announcement, 521; the record historically true, 521; certain special characteristics, 522; variations in language of records, 523; division into two tables, 523; obligatory on all men, 525; warnings against disobedience, 527; corresponding promises, 538.
Tenth Commandment, its unity, 542; its transitional nature, 542; its spiritual testing, 543; Luther on, 543; introductory to the law of Christ, 544; Ursinus on, 544.
Tertullian, on the early Councils, 644.
Testaments, (covenants) Old and New, 364.
Thanksgiving, public, enjoined, 713; nature and extent of, 714.
Theology, progressive, 12; exists under limitations, 13; error of Macaulay, 13; theology never complete.
Thirty-Nine Articles, 30; in substance Calvinistic, 39; revised by Westminster Assembly, 46; their enduring quality and influence, 827; on supremacy of Scripture, 67, 116; the apocrypha, 97; God defined in, 125; the depravation of the race, 279; Christology, 308; sinlessness of Christ, 323; election, 384; spiritual value of this doctrine, 392; acceptance through Christ, 443; good works, 493; perseverance, 496; obedience to divine law, 512; concupiscence, 547; the civil magistrate, 570; civil rule of popes, 575; celibacy, 598; the church, 604; the church of Rome, 659; definition of the sacraments, 688; purgatory, 753; American revision of, 643.
Three Offices of Christ as mediator, 324; grounds of this distribution, 325; history of the analysis, 325; Eusebius on, Calvin on, 325; objections to, 326; all analytic descriptions inadequate, 327.
Toleration, imperfectly apprehended, 564; the Westminster doctrine of, 561, 815; two instances of intolerance, 566; toleration gradually developed; Mitchell, Masson on, 817; plea of the Provincial Assembly, 819; Toleration Act of 1689, 573; further improvement; present doctrine, 574.
Tradition rejected by Protestantism, 115.
Traducianism defined, 248; its claim considered, 249.
Transubstantiation, 686.
Trent, Council of, its Canons, 34, 122, 458; on the apocrypha, 96; church interpretation of Scripture, 115; the salvation of infants, 280; Christology, 311; the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, 333; the descensus ad inferos, 347; justification, 439, 458; saving faith, 476; churchly absolution, 486; good works, 489; obedience to the commandments, 510; the priesthood, 631; the power of the keys, 638; purgatory, 753.
Tridentine Catechism; Tridentine Profession, 34, 625.
Trinity in God defined, 160; internal, 166; external, 170; proofs adduced, 172; objections noted, 174; spiritual effect of the doctrine, 174; Confessions on, Chalcedonian statement, 166.
Trinity in salvation, 171; functions of the divine Persons, 172, 360, 410,
Tritheistic tendency among trinitarians, 168.
Trust in God; Father, Son and Spirit, 470; trust in the Spirit, its basis, 471.
Truthfulness of God, its nature, 156; manifest in providence, in Scripture, in the Gospel, 156.
Truth's Victory Over Error, (Dickson) on the inspiration of the Scriptures, 79; human activity in conversion, 433; perseverance of the saints, 494; Christian perfection, 508; moral law identical in all forms, 515.
Two Estates of Christ, humiliation and exaltation, 344; humiliation beginning in the kenosis, continued through life, culminat-

ing in death, 345; the descensus, the point of transition, 346; exaltation, in resurrection and ascension, 347; ruler over his people, earthly and heavenly, 348; judge over all, individual and general, 348.
Tyndall, prayer answered in providence, 230.
Types and promises realized in Christ, 364.

ULTIMATE CONSUMMATION, following resurrection and judgment, 786; kingdom of redemption ended, 786; combustion of the earth, 787.
Unitarian conception of Christ, 318; *see* Christ.
United Church, Scotland, on salvability of the heathen, 284; universality of the Gospel, 378; reprobation, 400; works of the unregenerate, 493; religious liberty, 573.
Unity of the race, natural evidences, 239; moral unity described, 240; biblical proofs, 239.
Universalism, restorationism, unwarranted, 358, 374, 751, 757, 780.
Universe, material, its magnitude, 208.
Urim and Thummim, Shechinah, pre-Christian forms of revelation, 76.
Ursinus, on interpreting the commandments, 518; on tenth commandment, 544.
Uses of the moral law, 512; to all, 516; to the unregenerate, 516; to Christians, 517.
Ussher, on justification and adoption, 450.

VAN OOSTERZEE, on the three offices of Christ, 326; the future of the earth, 728.
Vatican Council, on papal infallibity, 109; definition of God, 125; creation, 207.
Virtue, nature of, *see* Duty, Law, Morality.
Voluntaryism in America, 572.
Vow defined, 581; inferior senses, 582; monastic vows, Protestant Confessions on, 583; limitations of vows; must be voluntary, in conscience, with biblical warrant, 583; not works of supererogation, 584; Luther, Calvin on, 582.
Vulgate, Roman estimate, 96; Protestant, 108.

WARBURTON, development of law in Scripture, 520.
Warfield, on salvation of infants, 281.
Watson, on falling from grace, 498.
Wesley, on election, 387; on the corrupt state of man, 423; falling away, 498; Christian perfection, 502; estimate of Madame Guyon, 584.

WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY, THE; Lecture Fifteenth, 789–840.

Whateley, on the constitution of primitive churches, 648; slumber in the intermediate state, 750.
White, on conditional immortality, 746.
Westminster Assembly; producing causes and origin, 40; composition and organization, 42; character and qualifications of its membership, 43, 795; its sessions and procedure, 44; its ecclesiastical and liturgical labors, 45; its doctrinal work and products, 49, 797; difficulties, political and religious, encountered, 52, 795; its consecration, religious temper and purpose, 54, 797; its final dissolution, 55.
Westminster Assembly, estimates of it and its work; Manton, 43; Winer, 51; Briggs, 55; Milton, 568, 790, 795; Clarendon, Hallam, Masson, 789; Baxter, Hetherington, 790; Stoughton, Schaff, Mitchell, 791; Blunt, Marsden, 801; Stanley, 824, 827.
Westminster Symbols, when and how framed, 49; general quality, 61, 797; acceptance, in England, in Scotland, 56; in America; the Adopting Act, 58; approved in New England, 60; subsequent career in Britain, 827; prized by continental Protestantism, 822; their cosmic diffusion and influence, 831.
Westminster Symbols, their general structure, 62, 237, 405, 556; system and order, 352, 462, 800; theological completeness, 799; spiritual quality, 804; compared with other Protestant creeds, 61, 798, 826.
Will, theories respecting freedom, 294; *see* Ability, Free Will.
Will of God supreme, resistless, 149; its nature, 150.
Willful absence as ground of divorce, 595.
Winer, on value of Westminster Symbols, 51; notes of the church, Roman, Protestant, 605.
Wisdom of God, its nature, 145; its characteristics as intelligence, 146; as wisdom in the moral sense, 147.
Wittsius, on the revealing Logos, 425.
Woolsey, divorce and divorce legislation, 594.
Word, The, Scriptures; reading, 706; preaching, 707; hearing, 711.
Works of creation and providence revealing God, 70; works of man, *see* Good Works.
Worship enjoined, second commandment, 526; worship of false gods forbidden, 527; worship of images and pictures, 527, 704; nature of true adoration, 703; grounds of worship, 704; duty of social, 705; elements of true, 706; *see* Ordinances, Praise, Prayer.

ZWINGLI, on salvation of infants, 281; of some heathen, 284, 425; the allæosis, 316; good works, 490; civil magistracy, 569; celibacy, 592; the church, 603; true ministry, 631; the papacy, 657; purgatory, 753.

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